K

Q. HORATII FLACCI EPISTOLAE AD PISONES, ET AUGUSTUM:

With an ENGLISH

COMMENTARY and NOTES.

To which are added

TWO DISSERTATIONS:

THE ONE,

On the PROVINCES of the ſeveral Species of DRAMATIC POETRY;

THE OTHER,

ON POETICAL IMITATION.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

The SECOND EDITION, Corrected and Enlarged.

LONDON:

Printed for W. THURLBOURNE, at *Cambridge*; and ſold by R. DODSLEY, in *Pall-mall*; J. BEECROFT, in *Lombard-ſtreet*; and M. COOPER, in *Pater-noſter-Row*.

MDCCL III.

BRITISH MUSEUM

Q. HORATII FLACCI

ARS POETICA,

EPISTOLA ad PISONES:

With an ENGLISH

COMMENTARY and NOTES.

To which is added

A DISSERTATION concerning the PROVINCES of the ſeveral Species of the DRAMA.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

Printed for W. THURLBOURNE at *Cambridge*;
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MD CCL III.


BRITISH MUSEUM

TO

Sir Edward Littleton, Bt.

The following

COMMENTARY, &c.

ON THE

ART of POETRY,

FIRST

WRITTEN for his USE,

Is now, with all Reſpect,

Inſcribed

By his moſt Obedient, and

Moſt faithful Servant,

The AUTHOR.

BRITISH MUSEUM

INTRODUCTION.

IT ſeemeth to be agreed on all hands, that the antients are our maſters in compoſition. Such of their writings therefore as deliver inſtructions for the exerciſe of this *art*, muſt be of the higheſt value. And, if any of them hath acquired a credit in this reſpect ſuperior to the reſt, it is, perhaps, the *following work:* which the learned have long ſince conſidered as a kind of *ſummary* of the rules of good writing; to be gotten by heart by every young ſtudent; and to whoſe deciſive authority the greateſt maſters in taſte and compoſition muſt finally ſubmit.

But the more unqueſtioned the credit of this poem is, the more will it concern the public, that it be juſtly and accurately underſtood. The writer of theſe ſheets then believed it might be of uſe, if he took ſome pains to clear the ſenſe, connect the method, and aſcertain the ſcope and purpoſe, of this admired epiſtle. Others, he knew indeed, and ſome of the firſt fame for critical learning, had been before him in this attempt. Yet he did not find himſelf prevented by their labours; in which, beſides innumerable leſſer faults, he, more eſpecially, obſerved two inveterate

errors, of ſuch a ſort, as muſt needs perplex the genius, and diſtreſs the learning of *any* commentator. The *one* of theſe reſpects the SUBJECT; the other, the METHOD of the *Art of poetry*. It will be neceſſary to ſay ſomething upon each.

1. That the *Art of poetry*, at large, is not the *proper* ſubject of this piece, is ſo apparent, that it hath not eſcaped the dulleſt and leaſt attentive of its critics[a]. For, however all the different *kinds* of poetry might appear to enter into it, yet every one ſaw, that *ſome* at leaſt were very ſlightly conſidered: whence the frequent attempts, the *artes et inſtitutiones poeticæ*, of writers both at home and abroad, to ſupply its deficiencies. But, though this was ſeen and confeſs'd, it unluckily happened, that the ſagacity of his numerous commentators went no further. They ſtill conſidered it as a *collection*, though not a *ſyſtem*, of criticiſms on poetry in general; with this conceſſion however, that the ſtage had evidently the largeſt ſhare in it. Under the influence of this prejudice, ſeveral writers of name took upon them to

[a] I muſt except, perhaps, NICOLAUS COLONIUS, a learned Italian of the XVI century, who, after having, as he aſſures us, carefully and with a faſtidious kind of diligence, inſpected the method, and weighed every ſingle precept, of this poem, was brought at length, by the force of a more than ordinary labour of thought, to this peculiar concluſion, *Horatium univerſam vim Poeticæ facultatis, quam ipſe magnus in primis Poeta, et magnis excultus doctrinis, animo comprehenſam tenebat, in hoc libello ad Piſones, quantum lex carminis pateretur, explicare voluiſſe.*

comment

comment and explane it: and with the ſucceſs, which was to be expected from ſo fatal a miſtake on ſetting out, as the not ſeeing, "that the proper and "ſole purpoſe of the author, was, not to abridge the "Greek critics, whom he probably never thought "of, nor to amuſe himſelf with compoſing a ſhort "critical ſyſtem, for the general uſe of poets, which "every line of it abſolutely confutes; but, ſimply to "criticize the ROMAN DRAMA." For to this end, not the tenor of the work only, but, as will appear, every ſingle precept in it, ultimately refers. The miſchiefs of this original error have been long felt. It hath occaſioned a conſtant perplexity in defining the *general* method, and in fixing the import of *particular* rules. Nay its effects have reached ſtill further. For conceiving, as they did, that the whole had been compoſed out of the Greek critics, the labour and ingenuity of its interpreters have been miſemployed in picking out authorities, which were not wanted, and in producing, or, more properly, by their abſurd refinements in *creating*, conformities, which were never deſigned. Whence it hath come to paſs, that, inſtead of inveſtigating the order of the poet's own reflexions, and ſcrutinizing the peculiar ſtate of the Roman ſtage (the methods, which common ſenſe and common criticiſm would preſcribe) the world hath been nauſeated with inſipid lectures on *Ariſtotle* and *Phalereus*; whoſe ſolid ſenſe hath been ſo attenuated and ſubtilized by the delicate

operation of French *critique*, as hath even gone ſome way towards bringing the *art* itſelf into diſrepute.

2. But the wrong explications of this poem have ariſen, not from the miſconception of the *ſubject* only, but an inattention to the METHOD of it. The *latter* was, in part, the genuin conſequence of the *former*. For, not ſuſpecting an unity of deſign in the ſubject, its interpreters never looked for, or could never find, a conſiſtency of diſpoſition in the method. And this was indeed the very block upon which HEINSIUS, and, before him, JULIUS SCALIGER, himſelf, ſtumbled. Theſe illuſtrious critics, with all the force of genius, which is required to diſembarraſs an involved ſubject, and all the aids of learning, that can lend a ray to enlighten a dark one, have, notwithſtanding, found themſelves utterly unable to unfold the order of this epiſtle; inſomuch, that the *one* [b], hath boldly pronounced the conduct of it to be *vicious*; and the *other* hath only attempted to evade the charge, by having recourſe to the unprecedented and uncritical expedient of a licentious tranſpoſition. The miſtake of both lay in this, that they apprehended, the poet's purpoſe had been to write a criticiſm of the art of poetry at large, and not, as is here ſhewn, of the Roman drama in particular. Though the blunder of HEINSIUS was perhaps ſomething more. For, as will be made appear in the notes on

[b] Præf. in LIB. POET. et l. vi. p. 338.

particular

particular places, this critic did not pervert the order of the piece, from a ſimple inapprehenſion of the drift of the ſubject, but, alſo, as he was unconſcious of the genuin charm and beauty of the *epiſtolary method*. And, becauſe I take this to be a principal reaſon of all the wrong interpretations, that have been given of this, as well as the other epiſtles of Horace; and it is, in itſelf, a point of curious criticiſm, of which little or nothing hath been ſaid by any good writer, I will take the liberty to enlarge a little upon it.

THE EPISTLE, however various in its appearances, is, in fact, but of *two* kinds; *one* of which may be called the DIDACTIC; the *other*, the ELEGIAC epiſtle. By the *firſt* I mean all thoſe epiſtles, whoſe end is to *inſtruct*; whether the ſubject be *morals*, *politics*, *criticiſm*, or, in general, *human life*: by the *latter*, all thoſe, whoſe end is to *move*; whether the occaſion be *love*, *friendſhip*, *jealouſy*, or other private diſtreſſes. If there are ſome of a lighter kind in Horace, and other good writers, which are not reducible to either of theſe two claſſes, they are to be regarded only, as the triflings of their pen, and deſerve not to be conſidered, as making a *third* and diſtinct ſpecies of this poem.

Now theſe two kinds of the *epiſtle*, as they differ widely from each other in their *ſubject* and *end*, ſo do they likewiſe in their *original*: though both *flouriſhed* at the ſame time, and are both wholly *Roman*.

I. The former, or DIDACTIC epiſtle, was, in fact, the true and proper offspring of the SATIRE. It will be worth while to reflect how this happened. *Satire*, in its origin, was a mere extemporaneous jumble of mirth and ill-nature. ENNIUS civilized both, but left it without form or method; it being only, in his hands, a rhapſody of poems on different ſubjects, and in different meaſures. Common ſenſe diſclaiming the extravagance of this heterogeneous mixture, LUCILIUS advanced it, in its next ſtep, to an unity of *deſign* and *metre*; which was ſo conſiderable a change, that it procured him the high appellation of INVENTOR of this poem. Though, when I ſay, that Lucilius introduced into ſatire *an unity of metre*, I mean only, in *the ſame piece*; for the meaſure, in different ſatires, was different. That the *deſign* in him was *one*, I conclude, *firſt*, Becauſe Horace expreſly informs us, that the *form or kind of writing* in the ſatires of Lucilius was exactly the ſame with *that* in his own; in which, whatever becomes of the *epiſtles*, no one will pretend, that there is the leaſt appearance of that rhapſodical, detached form, which made the character of the *old ſatire*. But, *principally*, becauſe on any other ſuppoſition, it does not appear, what could give Lucilius a claim to that high appellation of INVENTOR of this poem. That he was the *firſt*, who copied the manner of the *old comedy* in ſatire, could never be ſufficient for this purpoſe. For all, that he derived into it from thence,

was,

was, as Quinctilian ſpeaks, *libertas atque inde acerbitas et abunde ſalis.* It ſharpened his *invective*, and poliſhed his *wit*, that is, it improved, but did not alter the *form* of the ſatire. As little can a right to this title be pleaded from the *uniformity of meaſure*, which he introduced into it. For *this*, without an *unity of deſign*, is ſo far from being an alteration for the better, that it even heightens the abſurdity; it being ſurely more reaſonable to adapt different meaſures to different ſubjects, than to treat a number of inconnected and quite different ſubjects in the very *ſame* meaſure. When therefore Horace tells us, that Lucilius was the *Inventor* of the ſatire, it muſt needs be underſtood, that he was the FIRST, who, from its former disjointed ſtate, reduced it into a regular conſiſtent poem, reſpecting one main *end*, as well as obſerving one *meaſure*. Little now remained for HORACE but to poliſh and refine. His only material alteration was, that he appropriated to the ſatire *one*, that is, the heroic metre.

From this ſhort hiſtory of the ſatire we collect, 1. that its deſign was *one:* And 2. we learn, what was the general form of its compoſition. For, ariſing out of a looſe, disjointed, miſcellany, its method, when moſt regular, would be free and unconſtrained; nature demanding ſome chain of connection, and a reſpect to its origin requiring that connection to be ſomewhat concealed. But not its origin only, but *aim*, exacted this. For being, as

Diomedes obſerves, *archææ comœdiæ charactere compoſitum*, "profeſſedly written after the manner of the "old comedy", it was of courſe to admit the familiarity of the comic muſe; whoſe genius is averſe from all conſtraint of method, ſave that only which a natural, ſucceſſive train of thinking unavoidably draws along with it. And this, by the way, accounts for the dialogue air, ſo frequent in the Roman ſatire, as likewiſe for the looſer numbers which appeared ſo eſſential to the grace of it. It was in learned alluſion to this comic genius of the ſatire, that Mr. Pope hath juſtly characterized it in the following manner:

"Horace ſtill charms with graceful negligence,
"And, without method, TALKS us into ſenſe.

2. It being now ſeen, what was the real form of the *ſatire*, nothing, it is plain, was wanting, but the application of a particular addreſs, to conſtitute the *didactic epiſtle:* the ſtructure of this poem, as preſcribed by the laws of nature and good ſenſe, being in nothing different from that of the *other*. For here 1. an *unity* of ſubject or deſign is indiſpenſably neceſſary, the freedom of a miſcellaneous matter being permitted only to the familiar letter. And 2. not profeſſing *formally* to inſtruct (which alone juſtifies the ſeverity of ſtrict method) but, when of the graveſt kind, in the way of addreſs only to *inſinuate* inſtruction, it naturally takes an air of negligence and inconnection, ſuch as we have before ſeen eſſential to the ſatire. All which is greatly confirmed by the teſtimony

teſtimony of *one*, who could not be uninformed in theſe matters. In addreſſing his friend on the object of his ſtudies, he ſays

ſive
Liventem ſatiram *nigra rubigine turpes*,
Seu tua NON ALIA *ſplendeſcat* epiſtola CURA.
[Stat. L. i. Sylv. Tiburt. M. V.]

plainly intimating, that the rules and labour of compoſition were exactly the ſame in theſe two poems. Though the critics on Statius, not apprehending this identity, or exact correſpondence between the *ſatire* and *epiſtle*, have unneceſſarily, and without warrant, altered the text, in this place, from ALIA into ALTA.

3. The general form and ſtructure of *this* epiſtle being thus clearly underſtood, it will now be eaſy, in few words, to deduce the peculiar laws of its compoſition.

And 1. it cannot wholly diveſt itſelf of all method: For, having only one point in view, it muſt of courſe purſue it by ſome kind of connection. The progreſs of the mind in rational thinking requires, that the chain be never broken entirely, even in its freeſt excurſions.

2. As there muſt needs be a *connection*, ſo *that connection* will beſt anſwer its end and the purpoſe of the writer, which, whilſt it leads, by a ſure train of thinking, to the concluſion in view, conceals itſelf all the while, and leaves to the reader the ſatiſfaction of ſupplying the intermediate links, and joining together, in his own mind, what is left in a ſeeming

ing poſture of neglect and inconnection. The art of furniſhing this gratification, ſo reſpectful to the ſagacity of the reader, without putting him to the trouble of a painful inveſtigation, is what conſtitutes the ſupreme charm and beauty of EPISTOLARY METHOD.

II. What hath hitherto been advanced reſpects chiefly the *didactic* form. It remains to ſay ſomething of that other *ſpecies* of the epiſtle, the ELEGIAC; which, as I obſerved, had quite another *original*. For this apparently ſprung up from what is properly called the *Elegy:* a poem of very antient Greek extraction: naturally ariſing from the plaintive, querulous humour of mankind; which, under the preſſure of any grief, is impatient to break forth into wailings and tender expoſtulations, and finds a kind of relief in indulging and giving a looſe to that flow of ſorrow, which it hath not ſtrength or reſolution wholly [d] to reſtrain. This is the account of the *Elegy* in its proper Greek form; a negligent, inconnected, abrupt ſpecies of writing, perfectly ſuited to an indolent diſpoſition and paſſionate heart. Such was OVID'S; who, taking advantage of this character of the elegy, contrived [e] a new kind of poetry, without the expence of much invention, or labour to

[d] *Mærorem minui*, ſays Tully, grieving for the loſs of his daughter, *dolorem nec potui, nec, ſi poſſem*, VELLEM. [Ep. ad Att. xii. 28.] A ſtriking picture of real grief!

[e] *Vel tibi compoſita cantetur* EPISTOLA *voce*;
IGNOTUM HOC ALIIS ILLE NOVAVIT OPUS.
ART. AMAT. l. iii. ℣ 345.

himſelf.

himſelf. For collecting, as it were, thoſe ſcattered hints, which compoſed the elegy, and directing them to one principal view; and ſuperadding a perſonal addreſs, he became the author of what is here ſtyled the *Elegiac* epiſtle; beautiful models of which we have in his HEROIDES, and the *Epiſtles from* PONTUS. We ſee then the difference of *this* from the *didactic* form. They have both one principal end and point in view. But the *Didactic*, being of a cooler and more ſedate turn, purſues its deſign uniformly and connects eaſily. The *Elegiac*, on the contrary, whoſe end is *emotion*, not *inſtruction*, hath all the abruptneſſes of irregular diſordered paſſion. It catches at remote and diſtant hints, and ſtarts at once into a digreſſive train of thinking, which it requires ſome degree of enthuſiaſm in the reader to follow.

Further than this it is not material to my preſent deſign to purſue this ſubject. More exact ideas of the form and conſtitution of this epiſtle, muſt be ſought in that beſt example of it, the natural Roman poet. It may only be obſerved of the different qualities, neceſſary to thoſe, who aſpire to excel in theſe *two* ſpecies; that, as the *one* would make an impreſſion on the *heart*, it can only do this by means of an exquiſite *ſenſibility of nature and elegance of mind*; and that the *other*, attempting in the moſt inoffenſive manner, to inform the *head*, muſt demand, to the full accompliſhment of its purpoſe, *ſuperior good ſenſe*, *the wideſt knowledge of life*, and, above all, *the politeneſs*

neſs of a conſummate addreſs. That the *former* was the characteriſtic of OVID's genius hath been obſerved, and is well known. How far the *latter* deſcription agrees to HORACE can be no ſecret to thoſe of his readers, who have any ſhare, or conception of theſe talents themſelves. But matters of this *nicer* kind are properly the objects, not of *criticiſm*, but of *ſentiment.* Let it ſuffice then to examine the poet's practice, ſo far only, as we are enabled to judge of it by the ſtandard of the preceding rules.

III. Theſe rules are reducible to *three.* 1. *that there be an unity in the ſubject.* 2. *a connection in the method:* and 3. *that ſuch connection be eaſy.* All which I ſuppoſe to have been religiouſly obſerved in the poet's conduct of *this*, i. e. the *didactic* epiſtle. For,

[1.] The *ſubject* of each epiſtle is one: that is, one ſingle point is proſecuted through the whole piece, notwithſtanding that the addreſs of the poet, and the delicacy of the ſubject may ſometimes lead him through a devious track to it. Had his interpreters attended to this practice, ſo conſonant to the rule of nature before explained, they could never have found *an art of poetry* in the epiſtle, we are about to examine.

[2.] This one point, however it hath not been ſeen [5], is conſtantly purſued by an uniform, conſiſtent

[5] J. Scaliger ſays, *Epiſtolas, Græcorum more, Phocyllidæ atque Theognidis* [Horatius] *ſcripſit: præceptis philoſophiæ divulſis minimeque inter ſe cohærentibus.* And another great critic, in particular, of *this* epiſtle: *Non ſolum anti-*

method;

method; which is never more artificial, than when leaſt apparent to a careleſs, inattentive reader. This ſhould have ſtimulated his learned critics to have ſought the connection of the poet's own ideas, when they magiſterially ſet themſelves to tranſpoſe or vilify his method.

[3.] This method is every where ſufficiently *clear and obvious*; proceeding if not in the ſtricteſt forms of *diſpoſition*, yet, in an eaſy, elegant progreſs, one hint ariſing out of another, and inſenſibly giving occaſion to ſucceeding ones, juſt as the cooler genius of this *kind* required. This, laſtly, ſhould have prevented thoſe, who have taken upon themſelves to criticize *the art of poetry* by the laws of *this* poem, from concealing their ignorance of its real views under the cover of ſuch abrupt and violent tranſitions, as might better agree to the impaſſioned *elegy*, than to the ſedate *didactic epiſtle*.

To ſet this three-fold character, in the fulleſt light, before the view of the reader, I have attempted to explane the *Epiſtle to the Piſos*, in the way of continued commentary upon it. And even *this*, that the coherence of the ſeveral parts may be the more diſtinctly ſeen, is rendered as conciſe as poſſible; ſome of the finer and more obvious connections be-

quorum ὑποθῆκαι in moralibus hoc habuere, ut ἀκολουθίαν non ſervarent, ſed etiam alia de quibuſcunque rebus præcepta. Sic Epiſtola Horatii ad Piſones de Poëticâ perpetuum ordinem ſeriemque NULLAM *habet, ſed ab uno præcepto ad aliud tranſilit, quamvis* NULLA *ſit materiæ affinitas ad ſenſum connectendum.* Salmaſii Not. in Epictetum et Simplicium, p. 13. *Lugd. Bat.* 1640.

ing

ing purpoſely obſerved and drawn out in the notes.

For the *kind* of interpretation itſelf, it muſt be allowed, of all others, the fitteſt to throw light upon a difficult and obſcure ſubject, and, above all, to convey an exact idea of the ſcope and order of any work. It hath, accordingly, been ſo conſidered by ſeveral of the foreign, particularly, the ITALIAN, critics; who have eſſayed long ſince to illuſtrate, in this way, the very piece before us. But the *ſucceſs* of theſe foreigners is, I am ſenſible, a ſlender recommendation of their *method*. I chuſe therefore to reſt on the *ſingle* authority of a great author, who, in his *edition* of our Engliſh Horace, the *beſt* that was ever given of any claſſic, hath now retrieved and eſtabliſhed the full credit of it. What was the amuſement of his pen, becomes, indeed, the *labour* of inferior writers. Yet, on theſe unequal terms, it can be no diſcredit to have aim'd at ſome reſemblance of one of the leaſt of thoſe *merits*, which ſhed their united honours on the name of the illuſtrious *friend* and *commentator* of Mr. POPE.

7 NO 61



Hayman, inv. & del. C. Grignion Sculp.

Q. HORATII FLACCI
ARS POETICA
EPISTOLA AD PISONES.

HUMANO capiti cervicem pictor equinam
Jungere si velit, & varias inducere plumas
Undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum
Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne;

COMMENTARY.

THE subject of this piece being, as I suppose, *one*, viz. *the state of the Roman Drama*, and common sense requiring, even in the freest forms of composition, some kind of *method*, the intelligent reader will not be surprized to find the poet prosecuting his subject in a regular, well-ordered *plan*; which, for the more exact description of it, I distinguish into three parts:

I. The

Spectatum admiſſi riſum teneatis amici? 5
Credite, Piſones, iſti tabulae fore librum
Perſimilem, cujus, velut aegri ſomnia, vanae
Fingentur ſpecies; ut nec pes, nec caput uni
Reddatur formae. Pictoribus atque poetis
Quidlibet audendi ſemper fuit aequa poteſtas: 10
Scimus, & hanc veniam petimuſque damuſque viciſſim:

COMMENTARY.

I. The firſt of them [from ℣ 1 to 89] is preparatory to the main ſubject of the epiſtle, containing ſome general rules and reflexions on poetry, but principally with an eye to the following parts: by which means it ſerves as an uſeful introduction to the poet's deſign, and opens with that air of eaſe and negligence, eſſential to the epiſtolary form.

II. The main body of the epiſtle [from ℣ 89 to 295] is laid out in regulating the *Roman* ſtage; but chiefly in giving rules for tragedy; not only as that was the ſublimer ſpecies of the *Drama*, but, as it ſhould ſeem, leſs cultivated and underſtood.

III. The laſt part [from ℣ 295 to the end] exhorts to correctneſs in writing; and is taken up partly in removing the cauſes, that prevented it, and partly in directing to the uſe of ſuch means, as might ſerve to promote it. Such is the general plan of the epiſtle. In order to enter fully into it, it will be neceſſary to trace the poet, attentively, through the elegant connexions of his own method.

PART I.

General reflexions on poetry.

THE epiſtle begins [to ℣ 9] with that general and fundamental precept of preſerving an unity in the ſubject and the diſpoſition of the piece. This is further explained by defining the uſe, and fixing the character of *poetic licence* [from ℣ 9 to 13] which unſkillful writers often plead in

Sed non ut placidis coeant inmitia; non ut
Serpentes avibus geminentur, tigribus agni.
Inceptis gravibus plerumque et magna profeſſis
Purpureus, late qui ſplendeat, unus et alter
Adſuitur pannus: cum lucus, et ara Dianae,
Et properantis aquae per amoenos ambitus agros,
Aut flumen Rhenum, aut pluvius deſcribitur arcus.
Sed nunc non erat his locus: et fortaſſe cupreſſum
Scis ſimulare: quid hoc, ſi fractis enatat exſpes
Navibus, aere dato qui pingitur? amphora coepit
Inſtitui, currente rota, cur urceus exit?
Denique ſit quidvis; ſimplex dumtaxat et unum.
Maxima pars vatum, pater et juvenes patre digni,
Decipimur ſpecie recti. Brevis eſſe laboro,

COMMENTARY.

in defence of abſurd tranſgreſſions againſt the law of UNITY. To ℣ 23 is conſidered and expoſed that particular violation of *uniformity*, into which young poets eſpecially are apt to run, ariſing from frequent and ill-aimed deſcriptions. Theſe, however beautiful in themſelves, and with whatever maſtery they may be executed, yet, if foreign to the ſubject, and incongruous to the place, where they ſtand, are extremely impertinent: a caution, the more neceſſary, as the miſtake itſelf ariſes [from ℣ 23 to 25] from an ambition of being right. There are two caſes, in which this *ambition* remarkably miſleads us. The *firſt* is, when it tempts us to puſh an *acknowledged beauty* too far. Great beauties are always in the confines of great faults; and therefore, by affecting ſuperior excellence, we are eaſily carried into abſurdity. Thus [from ℣ 25 to 30] *brevity* is often *obſcurity*; *ſublimity*, *bombaſt*; *caution*, *coolneſs*; and, to come round to the point, a fond-

Obſcurus fio: ſectantem lenia nervi
Deficiunt animique: profeſſus grandia turget:
Serpit humi tutus nimium timiduſque procellae:
Qui variare cupit rem prodigialiter unam,
Delphinum ſilvis adpingit, fluctibus aprum.
In vitium ducit culpae fuga, ſi caret arte.
Aemilium circa ludum faber, unus et unguis
Exprimet, et mollis imitabitur aera capillos;
Infelix operis, ſumma: quia ponere totum
Neſciet. hunc ego me, ſi quid componere curem,
Non magis eſſe velim; quam naſo vivere pravo,

COMMENTARY.

neſs for *varying and diverſifying a ſubject*, by means of epiſodes and deſcriptions, ſuch as are mentioned above [℣ 15] will often betray a writer into that capital error of violating the *unity* of his piece. For, though variety be a real excellence under the conduct of true judgment, yet, when affected beyond the bounds of probability, and brought in ſolely to *ſtrike* and *ſurprize*, it becomes unſeaſonable and abſurd. The ſeveral epiſodes or deſcriptions, intended to give that variety, may be inſerted in improper places; and then the abſurdity is as great, as that of the painter, who, according to the illuſtration of ℣ 19, 20, ſhould introduce a cypreſs into a ſea-piece, or, according to the illuſtration of the preſent verſe, who paints a dolphin in a wood, or a boar in the ſea.

2. Another inſtance, in which we are miſled by an *ambition of attaining to what is right*, is, when, through an exceſſive fear of committing faults, we diſqualify ourſelves for the juſt execution of a *whole*, or of ſuch *particulars*, as are ſuſceptible of real beauty. For not the affectation of ſuperior excellencies only, but even

In vitium ducit culpae fuga, *ſi caret arte.*

This

Spectandum nigris oculis nigroque capillo.
Sumite materiam veſtris, qui ſcribitis, aequam
Viribus; & verſate diu, quid ferre recuſent,
Quid valeant humeri. cui lecta potenter erit res,
Nec facundia deſeret hunc, nec lucidus ordo.
Ordinis haec virtus erit & venus, aut egō fallor;
Ut jam nunc dicat jam nunc debentia dici,
Pleraque differat & praeſens in tempus omittat.
Hoc amet, hoc ſpernat, promiſſi carminis auctor.

COMMENTARY.

This is aptly illuſtrated by the caſe of a ſculptor; whoſe over-ſcrupulous diligence to finiſh ſingle and trivial parts in a ſtatue, which, when moſt exact, are only not faulty, leaves him utterly incapable of doing juſtice to the more important members, and, above all, of deſigning and completing a *whole* with any degree of perfection. But this latter is commonly the defect of a minute genius; who, having taken in hand a deſign, which he is by no means able to execute, naturally applies himſelf to labour and finiſh thoſe parts, which he finds are within his power. It is of conſequence therefore [from ℣ 38 to 40] for every writer to be well informed of the nature and extent of his own talents: and to be cautious in chuſing a ſubject, which is, in all its parts, proportioned to his ſtrength and ability. Beſides, from ſuch an attentive ſurvey of his ſubject, and of his capacity to treat it, there will alſo reſult to him theſe further advantages [℣ 41] 1. That he cannot be wanting in a proper fund of matter, wherewith to inlarge under every head: nor, 2. can he fail, by ſuch a well-weighed choice, to diſpoſe of his ſubject in the beſt and moſt advantagious method. Eſpecially, as to the latter, which is the principal benefit, he will perceive [to ℣ 45] where it will be uſeful to preſerve, and where to change, the natural order of his ſubject, according as it may beſt ſerve to anſwer the ends of poetry.

In verbis etiam tenuis cautuſque ſerendis,
Dixeris egregie, notum ſi callida verbum
Reddiderit junctura novum. ſi forte neceſſe eſt
Indiciis monſtrare recentibus abdita rerum;
Fingere cinctutis non exaudita Cethegis
Continget: dabiturque licentia ſumta pudenter.
Et nova factaque nuper habebunt verba fidem; ſi
Graeco fonte cadent, parce detorta. quid autem?

COMMENTARY.

Thus far ſome general reflexions concerning *poetical diſtribution*; principally, as it may be affected by falſe notions, 1. Of *poetic licence* [ỳ 10] and, 2. Of *poetic perfection* [ỳ 25.] But the ſame cauſes will equally affect the *language*, as *method*, of poetry. To theſe then are properly ſubjoined ſome directions about the *uſe of words*. Now this particular depending ſo entirely on what is out of the reach of rule, as the faſhion of the age, the taſte of the writer, and his knowledge of the language, in which he writes, the poet only gives directions about *new words*; or, ſince every language is neceſſarily imperfect, about the *coining of ſuch words*, as the writer's neceſſity or convenience may demand. And here, after having preſcribed [l. 46] a great *caution* and *ſparingneſs* in the thing itſelf, he obſerves, 1. [to l. 49] That where it ought to be done, the better and leſs offenſive way will be, not to coin a *word* entirely new (for this is ever a taſk of ſome envy) but, by means of an ingenious and happy poſition of a well-known word, in reſpect of ſome others, to give it a new air, and caſt. Or, if it be neceſſary to *coin new words*, as it will be in ſubjects of an abſtruſe nature, and eſpecially ſuch, as were never before treated in the language, that then, 2. [to l. 54] this liberty is very allowable; but that the reception of them will be more eaſy, if we borrow them from a language, as the Greek, already known, and approved. And, to obviate the prejudices of over-ſcrupulous

Caecilio Plautoque dabit Romanus, ademtum
Virgilio Varioque? ego cur adquirere pauca,
Si poſſum, invideor? quum lingua Catonis & Ennî
Sermonem patrium ditaverit, & nova rerum
Nomina protulerit. licuit, ſemperque licebit
Signatum praeſente nota procudere nummum.
Ut ſilvis folia privos mutantur in annos;
Prima cadunt: ita verborum vetus interit aetas,
Et juvenum ritu florent modo nata vigentque.
Debemur morti nos, noſtraque: ſive receptus
Terra Neptunus claſſis Aquilonibus arcet,
Regis opus; ſteriliſve palus prius aptaque remis
Vicinas urbis alit, & grave ſentit aratrum:
Seu curſum mutavit iniquum frugibus amnis,
Doctus iter melius: mortalia cuncta peribunt:
Nedum ſermonum ſtet honos, & gratia vivax.
Multa renaſcentur, quae jam cecidere; cadentque,
Quae nunc ſunt in honore vocabula: ſi volet uſus,
Quem penes arbitrium eſt, & jus, & norma loquendi.
Res geſtae regumque ducumque, & triſtia bella,
Quo ſcribi poſſent numero, monſtravit Homerus,

COMMENTARY.

pulous critics on this head, he goes on [from l. 54 to l. 73] in a vein of popular illuſtration, to alledge, in favour of this liberty, the examples of antient writers, and the vague, unſteddy nature of language itſelf.

From theſe reflexions on poetry, at large, he proceeds now to *particulars:* the moſt obvious of which being the

Verſibus inpariter junctis querimonia primum,
Poſt etiam incluſa eſt voti ſententia compos.
Quis tamen exiguos elegos emiſerit auctor,
Grammatici certant, & adhuc ſub judice lis eſt.
Archilochum proprio rabies armavit iambo.
Hunc ſocci cepere pedem grandeſque cothurni,
Alternis aptum ſermonibus, & popularis
Vincentem ſtrepitus, & natum rebus agendis.
Muſa dedit fidibus Divos, pueroſque Deorum,
Et pugilem victorem, & equum certamine primum,
Et juvenum curas, & libera vina referre.
Deſcriptas ſervare vices operumque colores,
Cur ego, ſi nequeo ignoroque, poeta ſalutor?
Cur neſcire, pudens prave, quam diſcere malo?
Verſibus exponi tragicis res comica non volt:
Indignatur item privatis ac prope ſocco

COMMENTARY.

different *forms and meaſures* of poetic compoſition, he conſiders, in this view [from ℣ 75 to 86] the four great ſpecies of poetry, to which all others may be reduced, *the Epic, Elegiac, Dramatic*, and *Lyric*. But the diſtinction of the *meaſures* to be obſerved in the ſeveral ſpecies of poetry is ſo obvious, that there can ſcarcely be any miſtake about them. The difficulty is to know [from ℣ 86 to 89] how far, each may partake of the *ſpirit* of the other, without deſtroying that *natural and neceſſary difference*, which ought to ſubſiſt betwixt them all. To explane this, which is a point of great nicety, he conſiders [from ℣ 89 to 99] the caſe of dramatic poetry; the two ſpecies of which are as diſtinct from each other, as any two can be, and yet there are times, when the features of the one will be allowed

Dignis carminibus narrari coena Thyeſtae.
Singula quaeque locum teneant ſortita decentem.
Interdum tamen & vocem comoedia tollit,
Iratuſque Chremes tumido dilitigat ore.
Et tragicus plerumque dolet ſermone pedeſtri.
Telephus aut Peleus, cum pauper & exul uterque,
Projicit ampullas et ſeſquipedalia verba,
Si curat cor ſpectantis tetigiſſe querela.
Non ſatis eſt pulchra eſſe poëmata; dulcia ſunto,
Et quocunque volent, animum auditoris agunto.
Ut ridentibus adrident, ita flentibus adflent
Humani voltus. ſi vis me flere, dolendum eſt
Primum ipſi tibi: tunc tua me infortunia laedent.

COMMENTARY.

lowed to reſemble thoſe of the other. For, 1. Comedy, in the paſſionate parts, will admit of a tragic elevation: and, 2. Tragedy, in its ſoft diſtreſsful ſcenes, condeſcends to the eaſe of familiar converſation. But the poet had a further view in chuſing this inſtance. For he gets by this means into the main of his ſubject, which was dramatic poetry, and, by the moſt delicate tranſition imaginable, proceeds [from l. 89 to 323] to deliver a ſeries of rules, interſperſed with hiſtorical accounts, and enlivened by digreſſions, for the regulation and improvement of the ROMAN STAGE.

PART II.

Directions for the regulation and improvement of the Roman ſtage.

HAVING fixed the diſtinct limits and provinces of the two ſpecies of the drama, the poet enters directly on his ſubject, and conſiders, I. [from ℣ 99 to 119] the pro-

Telephe, vel Peleu, male ſi mandata loqueris,
Aut dormitabo, aut ridebo. triſtia maeſtum
Vultum verba decent; iratum, plena minarum;
Ludentem, laſciva; ſeverum, ſeria dictu.
Format enim Natura prius nos intus ad omnem
Fortunarum habitum; juvat, aut impellit ad iram,
Aut ad humum maerore gravi deducit, & angit:
Poſt effert animi motus interprete lingua.
Si dicentis erunt fortunis abſona dicta,
Romani tollent equiteſque patreſque cachinnum.
Intererit multum, Divuſne loquatur, an heros;
Maturuſne ſenex, an adhuc florente juventa
Fervidus; & matrona potens, an ſedula nutrix;
Mercatorne vagus, cultorne virentis agelli;
Colchus, an Aſſyrius; Thebis nutritus, an Argis.
Aut famam ſequere, aut ſibi convenientia finge,
Scriptor. Homereum ſi forte reponis Achillem;

COMMENTARY.

perties of the TRAGIC STYLE; which will be different, 1. [to ℣ 111] according to the *internal ſtate and character* of the ſpeaker: thus one ſort of expreſſion will become the *angry*, another, the *ſorrowful*; this, the *gay*, that, the *ſevere*. And, 2. [from ℣ 111 to 119] according to the outward circumſtances of *rank*, *age*, *office*, or *country*.

II. Next [to ℣ 179] he treats of the CHARACTERS, which are of two ſorts. 1. *Old ones, revived:* and, 2. *Invented, or new ones*. In relation to the *firſt* [from ℣ 119 to 125] the precept is, to *follow fame*; that is, to faſhion the character according to the *received, ſtanding idea*, which tradition and elder times have conſecrated; that idea being

Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,
Jura neget ſibi nata, nihil non arroget armis.
Sit Medea ferox invictaque, flebilis Ino,
Perfidus Ixion, Io vaga, triſtis Oreſtes.
Si quid inexpertum ſcenae conmittis, & audes
Perſonam formare novam; ſervetur ad imum
Qualis ab incepto proceſſerit, & ſibi conſtet.
Difficile eſt proprie communia dicere: tuque
Rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in actus,
Quàm ſi proferres ignota indictaque primus.
Publica materies privati juris erit, ſi
Non circa vilem patulumque moraberis orbem;
Nec verbum verbo curabis reddere fidus
Interpres; nec deſilies imitator in artum,
Unde pedem proferre pudor vetet aut operis lex.

COMMENTARY.

ing the ſole teſt, whereby to judge of it. 2. In the reſpect of the *latter* [from ℣ 125 to 128] the great requiſite is *uniformity*, or *conſiſtency of repreſentation*. But the formation of quite *new characters* is a work of great difficulty and hazard. For here, there is no generally received and fixed *archetype* to work after, but every one judges, of common right, according to the extent and comprehenſion of his own idea. Therefore [to ℣ 136] he adviſes to labour and refit *old characters and ſubjects*; particularly thoſe, made known and authorized by the practice of Homer and the epic writers; and directs, at the ſame time, by what means to avoid that *ſervility and unoriginal air*, ſo often charged upon ſuch pieces. I ſaid *characters and ſubjects*, for his method leading him to guard againſt ſervility of imitation in point of *characters*, the poet choſe to diſpatch the

Nec ſic incipies, ut ſcriptor cyclius olim:
FORTUNAM PRIAMI CANTABO, ET NOBILE BELLUM.
Quid dignum tanto feret hic promiſſor hiatu?
Parturiunt montes: naſcetur ridiculus mus.
Quanto rectius hic, qui nîl molitur inepte!
DIC MIHI, MUSA, VIRUM, CAPTAE POST MOENIA TROJAE,
QUI MORES HOMINUM MULTORUM VIDIT ET URBIS.
Non fumum ex fulgore, ſed ex fumo dare lucem
Cogitat, ut ſpecioſa dehinc miracula promat,
Antiphaten, Scyllamque, & cum Cyclope Charybdin.
Nec reditum Diomedis ab interitu Meleagri,

COMMENTARY.

the whole affair of *ſervile imitation* at once, and therefore [to ỳ 136] includes *ſubjects*, as well as *characters*.

But this very advice, about taking the ſubjects and characters from the epic poets, might be apt to lead into two faults, ariſing from the ill conduct of thoſe poets themſelves. For, 1. [to ỳ 146] the dignity and importance of a ſubject, made ſacred by antient fame, had ſometimes betrayed into a boaſtful and oſtentatious beginning, than which nothing can be more abſurd. And, 2. The whole ſtory being compoſed of great and ſtriking particulars, injudicious writers, for fear of loſing any part of it, which might give an occaſion of ornamenting their work, had been led to follow the *round of plain hiſtoric order*, and ſo had made the diſpoſition of their piece *unintereſting and unartful*. Now both theſe improprieties, which appear ſo ſhocking in the *epic poem*, muſt needs, with ſtill higher reaſon, deform the *tragic*. For, taking its riſe, not from the flattering views of the *poet*, but the real ſituation of

Nec gemino bellum Trojanum orditur ab ovo:
Semper ad eventum feſtinat; & in medias res,
Non ſecus ac notas, auditorem rapit: & quae
Deſperat tractata niteſcere poſſe, relinquit:
Atque ita mentitur, ſic veris falſa remiſcet,
Primo ne medium, medio ne diſcrepet imum.
Tu, quid ego & populus mecum deſideret, audi;
Si fautoris eges aulaea manentis, & uſque
Seſſuri, donec cantor, Vos plaudite, dicat:
Aetatis cujuſque notandi ſunt tibi mores,
Mobilibuſque decor naturis dandus & annis.
Reddere qui voces jam ſcit puer, & pede certo
Signat humum; geſtit paribus colludere, & iram
Colligit ac ponit temere, & mutatur in horas.

COMMENTARY.

the *actor*, its opening muſt, of neceſſity, be very ſimple and unpretending. And, being, from its ſhort term of action, unable naturally to prepare and bring about many events, it, of courſe, confines itſelf to *one*; as alſo for the ſake of producing a due *diſtreſs* in the plot; which can never be wrought up to any *trying* pitch, unleſs the whole attention be made to fix on *one* ſingle object. The way to avoid both theſe faults, will be to obſerve (for here the imitation cannot be too cloſe) the well-judged practice of Homer.

Having thus conſidered the affair of *imitation*, and ſhewn how *old characters*, and, to carry it ſtill further, *old* ſubjects, may be ſucceſsfully treated, he reſumes the head of *characters*, and proceeds more fully [from ℣ 153 to 179] to recommend it as a point of principal concern in the drawing of them, to be well acquainted with the manners, agreeing to the ſeveral ſucceſſive periods and ſtages

Inberbus juvenis, tandem cuſtode remoto,
Gaudet equis canibuſque & aprici gramine campi;
Cereus in vitium flecti, monitoribus aſper,
Utilium tardus proviſor, prodigus aeris,
Sublimis, cupiduſque, & amata relinquere pernix.
Converſis ſtudiis, aetas animuſque virilis
Quaerit opes & amicitias, inſervit honori;
Conmiſiſſe cavet quod mox mutare laboret.
Multa ſenem circumveniunt incommoda; vel quod
Quaerit, & inventis miſer abſtinet, ac timet uti;
Vel quòd res omnis timide gelideque miniſtrat,
Dilator, ſpe lentus, iners, paviduſque futuri;
Difficilis, querulus, laudator temporis acti
Se puero, caſtigator, cenſorque minorum.
Multa ferunt anni venientes commoda ſecum,
Multa recedentes adimunt: ne forte ſeniles
Mandentur juveni partes, pueroque viriles.
Semper in adjunctis aevoque morabimur aptis.

COMMENTARY.

ſtages of human life. And this with propriety: for, though he had given a hint to this purpoſe before,

Maturuſne ſenex, an adhuc florente juventâ
Fervidus,

yet, as it is a point of ſingular importance, and a regard to *it*, beſides other diſtinctions, muſt be conſtantly had in the draught of every character, it well deſerved a ſeparate conſideration.

III. Theſe inſtructions, which, in ſome degree, reſpect all kinds of poetry, being diſmiſſed; he now delivers ſome rules more peculiarly relative to the caſe of the *drama.*

Aut agitur res in ſcenis, aut acta refertur:
Segnius inritant animos demiſſa per aurem,
Quam quae ſunt oculis ſubjecta fidelibus, & quae
Ipſe ſibi tradit ſpectator. non tamen intus
Digna geri promes in ſcenam: multaque tolles
Ex oculis, quae mox narret facundia praeſens:
Ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet;
Aut humana palam coquat exta nefarius Atreus;
Aut in avem Procne vertatur, Cadmus in anguem.
Quodcunque oſtendis mihi ſic, incredulus odi.
Neve minor, neu ſit quinto productior actu
Fabula, quae poſci volt, & ſpectata reponi.
Nec Deus interſit, niſi dignus vindice nodus
Inciderit: nec quarta loqui perſona laboret.
Actoris partis chorus, officiumque virile
Defendat: neu quid medios intercinat actus,

COMMENTARY.

drama. And, as the *miſapplication of manners*, which was the point he had been conſidering, was deſtructive of *probability*, this leads the poet, by a natural order, to cenſure ſome other ſpecies of miſconduct, which have the *ſame effect*. He determines then 1. [from ℣ 179 to 189] The caſe of *repreſentation* and *recital*: or what it is, which renders ſome things more proper to be *acted* on the ſtage, others more fit to be *related* on it. Next, 2. In purſuance of the ſame point, *viz. probability* [to ℣ 193] he reſtrains the uſe of *machines*; and preſcribes the number of *acts*, and of *perſons*, to be introduced on the ſtage at the ſame time. And, 3. laſtly, the *perſona dramatis*, juſt mentioned, ſuggeſting it to his thoughts, he takes occaſion from thence to paſs on to the *chorus* [from ℣ 193 to 202] whoſe double

Quod non propoſito conducat & haereat apte.
Ille bonis faveatque & conſilietur amice,
Et regat iratos, & amet pacare tumentis:
Ille dapes laudet menſae brevis, ille ſalubrem
Juſtitiam, legeſque, & apertis otia portis:
Ille tegat conmiſſa, Deoſque precetur & oret,
Ut redeat miſeris, abeat fortuna ſuperbis.
Tibia non, ut nunc, orichalco juncta, tubaeque
Aemula; ſed tenuis, ſimplexque foramine pauco,
Aſpirare & adeſſe choris erat utilis, atque
Nondum ſpiſſa nimis complere ſedilia flatu:
Quo ſane populus numerabilis, utpote parvus
Et frugi caſtuſque verecunduſque coibat.
Poſtquam coepit agros extendere victor, & urbem
Laxior amplecti murus, vinoque diurno
Placari Genius feſtis inpune diebus:

COMMENTARY.

office it was, 1. To ſuſtain the part of a *perſona dramatis* in the acts; and, 2. To connect the *acts* with ſongs, perſuading to good morals, and ſuitable to the ſubject. Further, tragedy being, originally, nothing more than a *chorus* or ſong, ſet to muſic, from which practice the harmony of the regular chorus in after-times had its riſe, he takes occaſion to digreſs [from ỳ 202 to 220] in explaining the ſimplicity and barbarity of the *old*, and the refinements of the *later*, muſic. The application of this account of the dramatic muſic to the caſe of the tragic chorus, together with a ſhort glance at the other improvements of *numbers*, *ſtyle*, &c. neceſſarily connected with it, gives him the opportunity of going off eaſily into a ſubject of near affinity with this, *viz.* the *Roman ſatiric piece*; which was indeed a ſpecies

Acceſſit numeriſque modiſque licentia major.
Indoctus quid enim ſaperet liberque laborum,
Ruſticus urbano confuſus, turpis honeſto?
Sic priſcae motumque & luxuriem addidit arti
Tibicen, traxitque vagus per pulpita veſtem:
Sic etiam fidibus voces crevere ſeveris,
Et tulit eloquium inſolitum facundia praeceps;
Utiliumque ſagax rerum, & divina futuri,
Sortilegis non diſcrepuit ſententia Delphis.
Carmine qui tragico vilem certavit ob hircum,
Mox etiam agreſtis Satyros nudavit, & aſper
Incolumi gravitate jocum tentavit: eo quod
Inlecebris erat & grata novitate morandus
Spectator functuſque ſacris, & potus, & exlex.

COMMENTARY.

a ſpecies of tragedy, but of ſo extraordinary a compoſition, as to require a ſet of rules, and inſtructions, peculiar to itſelf. A point, in which they agreed, but which was greatly miſunderſtood or ill-obſerved by his countrymen, was the kind of verſe or meaſure employed in them. This therefore, by a diſpoſition of the moſt beautiful method, he reſerves for a conſideration by itſelf, having, firſt of all, delivered ſuch rules, as ſeemed neceſſary about thoſe points, in which they eſſentially differed. He explains then [from ℣ 220 to 225] the *uſe and end* of the *ſatires*, ſhewing them to be deſigned for the exhilaration of the ruſtic youth, on their ſolemn feſtivities, after the exhibition of the graver, tragic ſhews. But, 2. To convert, as far as was poſſible, what was thus a neceſſary ſacrifice to the taſte of the multitude into a tolerable entertainment

for

Verum ita riſores, ita commendare dicacis
Conveniet Satyros, ita vertere ſeria ludo;
Ne quicunque Deus, quicunque adhibebitur heros
Regali conſpectus in auro nuper & oſtro,
Migret in obſcuras humili ſermone tabernas:
Aut, dum vitat humum, nubis & inania captet.
Effutire levis indigna tragoedia verſus,
Ut feſtis matrona moveri juſſa diebus,
Intererit Satyris paulum pudibunda protervis.
Non ego inornata & dominantia nomina ſolum
Verbaque, Piſones, Satyrorum ſcriptor amabo:
Nec ſic enitar tragico differre colori;
Ut nihil interſit, Davuſne loquatur & audax
Pythias emuncto lucrata Simone talentum,
An cuſtos famuluſque Dei Silenus alumni.
Ex noto fictum carmen ſequar: ut ſibi quivis
Speret idem; ſudet multum, fruſtraque laboret
Auſus idem: tantum ſeries juncturaque pollet:
Tantum de medio ſumtis accedit honoris.
Silvis deducti caveant, me judice, Fauni,

COMMENTARY.

for the better ſort, he lays down [from ℣ 225 to 240] the exacteſt deſcription or idea of this ſort of poem; by means of which he inſtructs us in the due temperature and decorum of the ſatyric ſtyle. 3. Laſtly, [from ℣ 240 to 251] he directs to the choice of proper ſubjects, and deſines the juſt character of thoſe principal and ſo uncommon *perſonages* in this drama, the *ſatyrs* themſelves. This being premiſed, he, conſiders, as was obſerved, what belongs

Ne velut innati triviis, ac pene forenſes,
Aut nimium teneris juvenentur verſibus umquam,
Aut inmunda crepent ignominioſaque dicta.
Offenduntur enim, quibus eſt equus, & pater, & res;
Nec, ſi quid fricti ciceris probat & nucis emtor,
Aequis accipiunt animis, donantve corona.
Syllaba longa brevi ſubjecta, vocatur Iambus,
Pes citus: unde etiam Trimetris adcreſcere juſſit
Nomen Iambeis, cum ſenos redderet ictus
Primus ad extremum ſimilis ſibi: non ita pridem,
Tardior ut paulo graviorque veniret ad auris,
Spondeos ſtabilis in jura paterna recepit
Commodus & patiens: non ut de ſede ſecunda
Cederet, aut quarta ſocialiter. Hic & in Accî
Nobilibus Trimetris apparet rarus, & Ennî.
In ſcenam miſſus cum magno pondere verſus,
Aut operae celeris nimium curaque carentis,
Aut ignoratae premit artis crimine turpi.
Non quivis videt immodulata poëmata judex:
Et data Romanis venia eſt indigna poetis.

Commentary.

longs in common to this with the regular tragedy [from ℣ 251 to 275] the laws and uſe of the *iambic* foot; reproving, at the ſame time, the indolence or ill-taſte of the Roman writers in this reſpect, and ſending them for inſtruction to the Grecian models.

Having introduced his critique on the *ſtage-muſic*, and *ſatyric drama*, with ſome account of the riſe and progreſs of *each*, the poet very properly concludes this whole part

Idcircone vager, ſcribamque licenter? ut omnis
Viſuros peccata putem mea; tutus & intra
Spem veniae cautus? vitavi denique culpam,
Non laudem merui. Vos exemplaria Graeca
Nocturna verſate manu, verſate diurna.
At veſtri proavi Plautinos & numeros &
Laudavere ſales; nimium patienter utrumque
(Ne dicam ſtulte) mirati: ſi modo ego & vos
Scimus inurbanum lepido ſeponere dicto,
Legitimumque ſonum digitis callemus & aure.
Ignotum tragicae genus inveniſſe Camenae
Dicitur, & plauſtris vexiſſe poemata Theſpis
Qui canerent agerentque, peruncti faecibus ora.
Poſt hunc perſonae pallaeque repertor honeſtae
Aeſchylos & modicis inſtravit pulpita tignis,
Et docuit magnumque loqui, nitique cothurno.

COMMENTARY.

[from ℣ 275 to 295] with a ſhort, incidental hiſtory of the principal improvements of the *Greek tragedy and comedy*; which was artfully contrived to inſinuate the defective ſtate of the Roman drama, and to admoniſh his countrymen, both how far they had gone, and what yet remained to complete it. And hence with the advantage of the eaſieſt tranſition he ſlides into the laſt part of the epiſtle; the deſign of which, as hath been obſerved, was to reprove an *incorrectneſs and want of care* in the Roman writers. For, having juſt obſerved their *defect*, he goes on, in the remaining part of the epiſtle, to ſum up the ſeveral cauſes, which ſeem to have produced it. And this gives him the opportunity, under every head, of preſcribing the proper

Succeſſit vetus his Comoedia, non ſine multa
Laude: ſed in vitium libertas excidit, & vim
Dignam lege regi: lex eſt accepta; choruſque
Turpiter obticuit, ſublato jure nocendi.
Nil intentatum noſtri liquere poëtae:
Nec minimum meruere decus, veſtigia Graeca
Auſi deſerere, & celebrare domeſtica facta,
Vel qui Praetextas, vel qui docuere Togatas.
Nec virtute foret clariſve potentius armis,
Quam lingua, Latium; ſi non offenderet unum-
Quemque poëtarum limae labor & mora. Vos, ô
Pompilius ſanguis, carmen reprehendite, quod non
Multa dies & multa litura coercuit, atque
Praeſectum decies non caſtigavit ad unguem.
Ingenium miſera quia fortunatius arte
Credit, & excludit ſanos Helicone poëtas

COMMENTARY.

per remedy for each, and of inſerting ſuch further rules and precepts for good writing, as could not ſo properly come in before. The whole is managed with ſingular addreſs, as will appear from looking over particulars.

PART III.

A care and diligence in writing recommended.

I. [from l. 295 to l. 323] THE poet ridicules that falſe notion, into which the Romans had fallen, that *poetry* and *poſſeſſion* were nearly the ſame thing: that nothing more was required in a poet, than ſome extravagant ſtarts

Democritus; bona pars non unguis ponere curat,
Non barbam: ſecreta petit loca, balnea vitat.
Nanciſcetur enim pretium nomenque poëtae,
Si tribus Anticyris caput inſanabile numquam
Tonſori Licino conmiſerit. O ego laevus,
Qui purgor bilem ſub verni temporis horam!
Non alius faceret meliora poëmata: verum
Nil tanti eſt. ergo fungar vice cotis, acutum
Reddere quae ferrum valet, exſors ipſa ſecandi.
Munus & officium, nil ſcribens ipſe, docebo;
Unde parentur opes: quid alat formetque poëtam;
Quid deceat, quid non; quo virtus, quo ferat error.
Scribendi recte, ſapere eſt & principium & fons.
Rem tibi Socraticae poterunt oſtendere chartae:

COMMENTARY.

and ſallies of thought; that coolneſs and reflexion were inconſiſtent with his character, and that poetry was not to be ſcanned by the rules of ſober ſenſe. This they carried ſo far, as to affect the outward port and air of madneſs, and, upon the ſtrength of that appearance, to ſet up for wits and poets. In oppoſition to this miſtake, which was one great hinderance to critical correctneſs, he aſſerts *wiſdom and good ſenſe to be the ſource and principle of good writing:* for the attainment of which he preſcribes, 1. [from ℣ 310 to 312] A careful ſtudy of the Socratic, that is, moral wiſdom: and, 2. [from ℣ 312 to 318] A thorough acquaintance with human nature, *that great exemplar of manners*, as he finely calls it, or, in other words, a wide, extenſive view of real, practical life. The joint direction of theſe two, as means of acquiring moral knowledge, was perfectly neceſſary. For the former, when

Verbaque proviſam rem non invita ſequentur.
Qui didicit patriae quid debeat, & quid amicis;
Quo ſit amore parens, quo frater amandus & hoſpes;
Quod ſit conſcripti, quod judicis officium; quae
Partes in bellum miſſi ducis; ille profecto
Reddere perſonae ſcit convenientia cuique.
Reſpicere exemplar vitae morumque jubebo
Doctum imitatorem, & veras hinc ducere voces.
Interdum ſpecioſa locis, morataque recte
Fabula, nullius veneris, ſine pondere & arte,
Valdius oblectat populum, meliuſque moratur,
Quam verſus inopes rerum, nugaeque canorae.

COMMENTARY.

when alone, is apt to grow abſtracted and unaffecting: the latter, uninſtructing and ſuperficial. The philoſopher talks without experience, and the man of the world without principles. United they ſupply each other's defects; while the man of the world borrows ſo much of the philoſopher, as to be able to adjuſt the ſeveral ſentiments with preciſion and exactneſs; and the philoſopher ſo much of the man of the world as to copy the manners of life (which we can only do by experience) with *truth* and ſpirit. Both together furniſh a thorough and complete comprehenſion of human life; which manifeſting itſelf in the *juſt*, and *affecting*, forms that exquiſite degree of perfection in the character of the dramatic poet; the want of which no warmth of genius can atone for, or excuſe. Nay ſuch is the force of this nice adjuſtment of *manners* [from l. 319 to 323] that, where it has remarkably prevailed, the ſucceſs of a play hath ſometimes been ſecured by it, without one ſingle excellence or recommendation beſides.

Graiis ingenium, Graiis dedit ore rotundo
Muſa loqui, praeter laudem, nullius avaris.
Romani pueri longis rationibus aſſem
Diſcunt in partis centum diducere. Dicas
Filius Albini, ſi de quincunce remota eſt
Uncia, quid ſuperet. poterat dixiſſe, triens? Eu!
Rem poteris ſervare tuam, Redit uncia: quid fit?
Semis. An haec animos aerugo & cura peculî
Cum ſemel inbuerit, ſperamus carmina fingi
Poſſe linenda cedro, & levi ſervanda cupreſſo?
Aut prodeſſe volunt, aut delectare poëtae;
Aut ſimul & jucunda & idonea dicere vitae.
Quicquid praecipies, eſto brevis: ut cito dicta
Percipiant animi dociles, teneantque fideles.
(Omne ſupervacuum pleno de pectore manat.)

COMMENTARY.

II. He ſhews [from l. 323 to 333] another cauſe of their incorrectneſs and want of ſucceſs, in any degree, anſwering to that of the Greek writers, to have been the low and illiberal education of the Roman youth; who, while the Greeks were taught to open all their mind to glory, were cramped in their genius by the ruſt of gain, and, by the early infuſion of ſuch pernicious principles, became unable to project a great deſign, or with any care and maſtery to complete it.

III. A third impediment to their ſucceſs in poetry [from l. 333 to 346] was their inattention to the *entire* ſcope and purpoſe of it, and from contenting themſelves with the attainment of one only of the two great ends, which are propoſed by it. For the double deſign of poetry being to *inſtruct* and *pleaſe*, the full aim and glory of the

Ficta voluptatis cauſa ſint proxima veris:
Ne, quodcumque volet, poſcat ſibi fabula credi;
Neu pranſae Lamiae vivum puerum extrahat alvo.
Centuriae ſeniorum agitant expertia frugis:
Celſi praetereunt auſtera poëmata Ramnes.
Omne tulit punctum, qui miſcuit utile dulci,
Lectorem delectando, pariterque monendo.
Hic meret aera liber Soſiis, hic & mare tranſit,
Et longum noto ſcriptori prorogat aevum.
Sunt delicta tamen, quibus ignoviſſe velimus:
Nam neque chorda ſonum reddit, quem volt manus & mens;
Poſcentique gravem perſaepe remittit acutum:
Nec ſemper feriet, quodcumque minabitur, arcus.
Verum ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego paucis

COMMENTARY.

the art cannot be attained without uniting them both: that is, *inſtructing* ſo as to *pleaſe*, and *pleaſing* ſo as to *inſtruct*. Under either head of *inſtruction* and *entertainment* the poet, with great addreſs, inſinuates the main art of each kind of writing, which conſiſts, 1. in *inſtructive* or *didactic poetry* [from ℣ 335 to 338] in the *conciſeneſs of the precept*: and, 2. in works of *fancy* and *entertainment* [l. 338 to 341] in *probability of fiction*. But both theſe [l. 341 to 347] muſt concur in a juſt piece.

But here the bad poet objects the difficulty of the terms, impoſed upon him, and that, if the critic looked for all theſe requiſites, and exacted them with rigour, it would be impoſſible to ſatisfy him: at leaſt it was more likely to diſcourage, than quicken, as he propoſed, the diligence of writers. To this the reply is [from l. 347 to 360]

Offendar maculis, quas aut incuria fudit,
Aut humana parum cavit natura. quid ergo eſt?
Ut ſcriptor ſi peccat idem librarius uſque,
Quamvis eſt monitus, venia caret; ut citharoedus
Ridetur, chorda qui ſemper oberrat eadem:
Sic mihi qui multum ceſſat, fit Choerilos ille,
Quem bis terve bonum, cum riſu miror; & idem
Indignor, quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus.
Verum operi longo fas eſt obrepere ſomnum.
Ut pictura, poëſis: erit quae, ſi propius ſtes,
Te capiat magis; & quaedam, ſi longius abſtes:
Haec amat obſcurum; volet haec ſub luce videri,
Judicis argutum quae non formidat acumen:
Haec placuit ſemel; haec decies repetita placebit.

COMMENTARY.

that he was not ſo ſevere, as to exact a faultleſs and perfect piece: that ſome inaccuracies and faults of leſs moment would eſcape the moſt cautious and guarded writer; and that, as he ſhould contemn a piece, that was generally bad, notwithſtanding a few beauties, he could, on the contrary, admire a work, that was generally good, notwithſtanding a few faults. Nay, he goes on [from l. 360 to 366] to obſerve in favour of writers, againſt their too rigorous cenſurers, that what were often called faults, were really not ſo; that ſome parts of a poem ought to be leſs *ſhining*, or leſs *finiſhed*, than others; according to the light, they were placed in, or the diſtance, from which they were viewed; and that, ſerving only to connect and lead to others of greater conſequence, it was ſufficient if they pleaſed once, or did not diſpleaſe, provided that thoſe others would pleaſe on every review. All this is

ſaid

O major juvenum, quamvis & voce paterna
Fingeris ad rectum, & per te ſapis; hoc tibi dictum
Tolle memor: certis medium ac tolerabile rebus
Recte concedi: conſultus juris, & actor
Cauſarum mediocris; abeſt virtute diſerti
Meſſallae, nec ſcit quantum Caſcellius Aulus;
Sed tamen in pretio eſt: mediocribus eſſe poëtis
Non homines, non Dî, non conceſſere columnae.
Ut gratas inter menſas ſymphonia diſcors,
Et craſſum unguentum, & Sardo cum melle papaver
Offendunt; poterat duci quia coena ſine iſtis:
Sic animis natum inventumque poëma juvandis,
Si paulum ſummo deceſſit, vergit ad imum.

COMMENTARY.

ſaid agreeably to *nature*, which does not allow every part of a ſubject, to be equally ſuſceptible of ornament; and to the *end of poetry*, which cannot ſo well be attained, without an inequality. The alluſions to painting, which the poet uſes, give this truth the happieſt illuſtration.

Having thus made all the reaſonable allowances, which a writer could expect, he goes on to inforce the general inſtruction of this part, *viz.* a *diligence in writing*, by ſhewing [from l. 366 to 379] that a *mediocrity*, however tolerable, or even commendable, it might be in other arts, would never be allowed in this: for which he aſſigns this very obvious and juſt reaſon; that, as the main end of poetry is to *pleaſe*, if it did not reach that point (which it could not do by ſtopping ever ſo little on this ſide excellence) it was, like bad muſic, bad perfumes, or any other bad thing, which we can do without, and whoſe end ſhould be to pleaſe, *offenſive, and diſagreeable*, and for want of being very good, exquiſitely and inſufferably bad,

Ludere qui neſcit, campeſtribus abſtinet armis;
Indoctuſque pilae, diſcive, trochive, quieſcit;
Ne ſpiſſae riſum tollant impune coronae:
Qui neſcit verſus, tamen audet fingere. Quid nî?
Liber & ingenuus; praeſertim cenſus equeſtrem
Summam nummorum, vitioque remotus ab omni.
Tu nihil invita dices facieſve Minerva:
Id tibi judicium eſt, ea mens. ſi quid tamen olim
Scripſeris, in Maecî deſcendat judicis auris,
Et patris, & noſtras; nonumque prematur in annum,
Membranis intus poſitis. Delere licebit
Quod non edideris: neſcit vox miſſa reverti.
Silveſtris homines ſacer interpreſque Deorum
Caedibus & victu foedo deterruit Orpheus;
Dictus ob hoc lenire tigris rabidoſque leones.

COMMENTARY.

bad. This reflexion leads him with great advantage [from l. 379 to 391] to the general concluſion in view, *viz.* that as none but excellent poetry will be allowed, it ſhould be a warning to writers, how they engage in it without abilities; or publiſh without ſevere and frequent correction. But to ſtimulate the poet, who, notwithſtanding the allowances already made, might be ſomething ſtruck with this laſt reflexion, he flings out [from l. 391 to 408] into a fine encomium on the dignity and excellence of the art itſelf, by recounting its antient honours. This encomium, beſides its great uſefulneſs in invigorating the mind of the poet, has this further view, to recommend and revive, together with its honours, the office of antient poeſy; which was employed about the nobleſt

Dictus & Amphion, Thebanae conditor arcis,
Saxa movere ſono teſtudinis, & prece blanda
Ducere quo vellet. fuit haec ſapientia quondam,
Publica privatis ſecernere, ſacra profanis;
Concubitu prohibere vago; dare jura maritis;
Oppida moliri; leges incidere ligno.
Sic honor & nomen divinis vatibus atque
Carminibus venit. poſt hoc inſignis Homerus
Tyrtaeuſque mares animos in Martia bella
Verſibus exacuit. dictae per carmina ſortes,
Et vitae monſtrata via eſt, & gratia regum
Pieriis tentata modis, luduſque repertus,
Et longorum operum finis; ne forte pudori
Sit tibi Muſa lyrae ſolers, & cantor Apollo.

COMMENTARY.

nobleſt and moſt important ſubjects; the ſacred ſource, from whence thoſe honours were derived.

From this tranſient view of the ſeveral ſpecies of poetry, terminating, as by a beautiful contrivance it is made to do, in the *Ode*, the order of his ideas carries him into ſome reflexions on the power of genius (which ſo eſſentially belongs to the lyric Muſe) and to ſettle thereby a point of criticiſm, much controverted amongſt the antients, and on which a very conſiderable ſtreſs would apparently be laid. For, if after all, ſo much art and care and caution be demanded in poetry, what becomes of genius, in which alone it had been thought to conſiſt? Would the critic inſinuate, that good poems can be the ſole effect of art, and go ſo far, in oppoſition to the reigning prejudice, as to aſſert nature to be of no force at all? This objection, which would be apt to occur to the general ſcope and tenor of the epiſtle, as having turned

Natura fieret laudabile carmen, an arte,
Quaeſitum eſt. Ego nec ſtudium ſine divite vena,
Nec rude quid poſſit video ingenium: alterius ſic
Altera poſcit opem res, & conjurat amice.
Qui ſtudet optatam curſu contingere metam,
Multa tulit fecitque puer; ſudavit & alſit;
Abſtinuit venere & vino. qui Pythia cantat
Tibicen, didicit prius, extimuitque magiſtrum.
Nec ſatis eſt dixiſſe, Ego mira poëmata pango:
Occupet extremum ſcabies: mihi turpe relinqui eſt,
Et, quod non didici, ſane neſcire fateri.
Ut praeco, ad merces turbam qui cogit emendas;
Adſentatores jubet ad lucrum ire poëta
Dives agris, dives poſitis in foenore nummis.
Si vero eſt, unctum qui recte ponere poſſit,

COMMENTARY.

principally on *art* and *rules* without inſiſting much on natural *energy*, the poet obviates at once [from ℣ 408 to 419] by reconciling two things which were held, it ſeems, incompatible, and demanding in the poet, beſides the fire of real genius, all the labour and diſcipline of art. But there is one thing ſtill wanting. The poet may be excellently formed by nature, and accompliſhed by art, but will his own judgment be a ſufficient guide, without aſſiſtance from others? Will not the partiality of an author for his own works ſometimes prevail over the united force of rules and genius, unleſs he call in a fairer and leſs intereſted guide? Doubtleſs it will: and therefore the poet, with the utmoſt propriety, adds [from ℣ 419 to 450] as a neceſſary part of this inſtructive monition to his brother poets, ſome directions concerning the choice of a prudent

Et ſpondere levi pro paupere, & eripere artis
Litibus inplicitum; mirabor, ſi ſciet inter-
Noſcere mendacem verumque beatus amicum.
Tu ſeu donaris, ſeu quid donare voles cui;
Nolito ad verſus tibi factos ducere plenum
Laetitiae: clamabit enim: Pulchre, bene, recte!
Palleſcet; ſuper his etiam ſtillabit amicis
Ex oculis rorem; ſaliet; tundet pede terram.
Ut qui conducti plorant in funere, dicunt
Et faciunt prope plura dolentibus ex animo: ſic
Deriſor vera plus laudatore movetur.
Reges dicuntur multis urguere culullis,
Et torquere mero, quem perſpexiſſe laborant
An ſit amicitia dignus. ſi carmina condes,
Nunquam te fallant animi ſub volpe latentes.
Quintilio ſi quid recitares: Corrige ſodes
Hoc, aiebat, & hoc. melius te poſſe negares,

COMMENTARY.

prudent and ſincere friend, whoſe unbyaſſed ſenſe might at all times correct the prejudices, indiſcretions, and overſights of the author. And to impreſs this neceſſary care, with greater force, on the poet, he cloſes the whole with ſhewing the dreadful conſequences of being impoſed upon in ſo nice an affair; repreſenting, in all the ſtrength of colouring, the picture of a bad poet, infatuated, to a degree of madneſs, by a fond conceit of his own works, and expoſed thereby (ſo important had been the ſervice of timely advice) to the contempt and ſcorn of the public.

And

Bis terque expertum fruſtra? delere jubebat,
Et male ter natos incudi reddere verſus.
Si defendere delictum, quam vertere, malles;
Nullum ultra verbum, aut operam inſumebat inanem,
Quin ſine rivali teque & tua ſolus amares.
Vir bonus & prudens verſus reprehendet inertis;
Culpabit duros; incomptis adlinet atrum
Tranſverſo calamo ſignum; ambitioſa recidet
Ornamenta; parum claris lucem dare coget;
Arguet ambigue dictum; mutanda notabit;
Fiet Ariſtarchus; non dicet, Cur ego amicum
Offendam in nugis? Hae nugae ſeria ducent
In mala deriſum ſemel, exceptumque ſiniſtre.
Ut mala quem ſcabies aut morbus regius urguet,
Aut fanaticus error, & iracunda Diana;
Veſanum tetigiſſe timent fugiuntque poëtam,
Qui ſapiunt: agitant pueri, incautique ſequuntur.

COMMENTARY.

And now, an unity of deſign in this epiſtle, and the pertinent connection of its ſeveral parts being, it is preſumed, from this method of illuſtration, clearly and indiſputably ſhewn, what will be thought of the critical talents of that faſhionable interpreter of Horace, who, after a ſtudied tranſlation of this piece, ſupported by a long, elaborate commentary, minutely condeſcending to ſcrutinize each part, could yet perceive ſo little of its true form and character, as to give it for his ſummary judgment, in concluſion; "*Comme il* [Horace] *ne travailloit pas à cela de ſuite et qu'il ne gardoit d'autre ordre que celui des matieres*

Hic, dum ſublimis verſus ructatur, & errat,
Si veluti merulis intentus decidit auceps
In puteum, foveamve; licet, Succurrite, longum
Clamet, io cives: non ſit qui tollere curet.
Si curet quis opem ferre, & demittere funem;
Quî ſcis, an prudens huc ſe projecerit, atque
Servari nolit? dicam: Siculique poëtae
Narrabo interitum. Deus inmortalis haberi
Dum cupit Empedocles, ardentem frigidus Aetnam
Inſiluit. ſit jus, liceatque perire poëtis.
Invitum qui ſervat, idem facit occidenti.
Nec ſemel hoc fecit; nec ſi retractus erit jam,
Fiet homo, & ponet famoſae mortis amorem.
Nec ſatis adparet, cur verſus factitet; utrum
Minxerit in patrios cineres, an triſte bidental
Moverit inceſtus: certe furit, ac velut urſus
Objectos caveae valuit ſi frangere clathros,
Indoctum doctumque fugat recitator acerbus.

COMMENTARY.

matieres que le hazard lui donnoit à lire et à examiner, il eſt arrivé delà qu' IL N' Y A AUCUNE METHODE NI AUCUNE LIAISON DE PARTIES DANS CE TRAITE, *qui même n'a jamais été achevé, Horace n' ayant pas eu le tems d'y mettre la derniere main, ou, ce qui eſt plus vraiſemblable, n'ayant pas voulu s'en donner la peine.*" [Introd. remarks to the art of poetry.] The ſofteſt thing that can be ſaid of ſuch a critic, is, that he well deſerves the cenſure, he ſo juſtly applied to the great Scaliger, *S'il l'avoit bien entendu, il lui*

Quem vero arripuit, tenet, occiditque legendo,
Non miſſura cutem, niſi plena cruoris, hirudo.

COMMENTARY.

lui auroit rendu plus de juſtice et en auroit parlé plus modeſtement.

NOTES

NOTES

ON THE

Art of Poetry.



PREFACE

TO THE

NOTES.

THE text of this epiſtle is given from Dr. BENTLEY's edition, except in ſome few places, of which the reader is advertized in the notes. Theſe, that they might not break in too much on the thread of the Commentary, are here printed by themſelves. For the reſt, let me apologize with a great critic: *Nobis viri docti ignoſcent, ſi hæc fuſius: præſertim ſi cogitent, veri critici eſſe, non literulam alibi ejicere, alibi innocentem ſyllabam & quæ nunquam male merita de patria fuerit, per jocum & ludum trucidare & configere; verùm recte de autoribus & rebus judicare, quod & ſolidæ & abſolutæ eruditionis eſt. Quo, ni fallor, omnes aſpiramus.* HEINSIUS.

NOTES
ON THE
ART OF POETRY.

1. HUMANO CAPITI, &c.] It is ſeen, in the comment, with what elegance this firſt part [to ℣ 89.] is made preparatory to the main ſubject, agreeably to the genius of the Epiſtle. But elegance, in good hands, always implies *propriety*; as is the caſe here. For the critic's rules muſt be taken either 1. from the *general* ſtanding laws of compoſition; or, 2. from the peculiar ones, appropriated to the *kind*. Now the direction to be fetched from the former of theſe ſources will of courſe *precede*, as well on account of its ſuperior dignity, as that the mind itſelf delights to deſcend from *univerſals* to the conſideration of *particulars*. Agreeably to this rule of nature, the poet, having to correct, in the Roman drama, theſe three points, 1. a miſconduct in the diſpoſition; 2. an abuſe of language; and, 3. a diſregard of the peculiar characters and *colourings* of its different ſpecies, hath choſen to do this on principles of univerſal nature; which,

while they include the caſe of the drama, at the ſame time extend to poetic compoſition at large. Theſe prefatory, univerſal obſervations being delivered, he then proceeds, with advantage, to the *ſecond* ſource of his art, viz. the conſideration of the laws and rules peculiar to the *kind*.

9.—PICTORIBUS ATQUE POETIS—QUIDLIBET AUDENDI SEMPER FUIT AEQUA POTESTAS.] This is from the mouth of an objector, which is obſerved, leſt the *modern* painter or poet ſhould take what is here ſaid too ſeriouſly.

14. INCEPTIS GRAVIBUS, &c.] Theſe preparatory obſervations concerning the laws of poetic compoſition at large have been thought to glance more *particularly* at the epic poetry: Which was not improper: For, 1. The *drama*, which he was about to criticiſe, had its riſe and origin from the *epos*. Thus we are told by the great critic, that Homer was the firſt who *invented dramatic immitations*, μόνος—ὅτι μιμήσεις δραματικὰς ἐποίησε. And to the ſame Purpoſe Plato: ἔοικε μὲν τῶν καλῶν ἁπάντων τούτων τῶν τραγικῶν πρῶτος διδάσκαλός τε καὶ ἡγεμὼν γενέσθαι [Ὅμηρος.] *De Rep.* l. x. Hence, as one obſerves, "There was no more left for tragedy to do after "him, than to erect a ſtage, and draw his dialogues "and characters into ſcenes; turning in the ſame "manner upon one principal action or event, with "regard

" regard to place and time, which was ſuitable to " a real ſpectacle." [*Characteriſ.* vol. 1. p. 198.] 2. The ſeveral cenſures, here pointed at the epic, would bear ſtill more directly againſt the tragic poem; it being more glaringly inconſiſtent with the genius of the *drama* to admit of foreign and digreſſive ornaments, than of the extended, epiſodical *epopœia*. For both theſe reaſons it was altogether pertinent to the poet's purpoſe, in a criticiſm on the *drama*, to expoſe the vicious practice of the *epic* models. Though, to preſerve the unity of his piece, and for a further reaſon [ſee n. on ℣ 1.] he hath artfully done this under the cover of *general* criticiſm.

19. SED NUNC NON ERAT HIS LOCUS.] If one was to apply this obſervation to our dramatic writings, I know of none which could furniſh pleaſanter inſtances of the abſurdity, here expoſed, than the famous ORPHAN of Otway. Which, notwithſtanding its real beauties, could hardly have taken ſo prodigiouſly, as it hath done, on our ſtage, if there were not ſomewhere a defect of *good taſte* as well as of *good morals*.

29. QUI VARIARE CUPIT REM PRODIGIALITER UNAM, &c.] The word *prodigialiter* apparently refers to that fictitious monſter, under which the poet alluſively ſhadows out the idea of abſurd and inconſiſtent compoſition. The application, however,

differs in this, that, whereas the monſter, there painted, was intended to expoſe the extravagance of putting together *incongruous parts*, without any reference to a *whole*, this *prodigy* is deſigned to characterize a *whole*, but deformed by the ill-judged *poſition* of its *parts*. The former is like a monſter, whoſe ſeveral members, as of right belonging to different animals, could, by no diſpoſition, be made to conſtitute *one* conſiſtent animal. The other, like landſkip, which hath no objects abſolutely *irrelative* or irreducible to a *whole*, but which a wrong poſition of the *parts* only renders *prodigious*. Send the *boar to the woods*; and the *dolphin to the waves*; and the painter might ſhew them both on the ſame canvaſs.

Each is a violation of the law of unity, and a real *monſter*: the one, becauſe it contains an aſſemblage of natural *incohærent parts*; the other, becauſe its parts, though in themſelves *coherent*, are *miſplaced*, and disjointed.

34. INFELIX OPERIS SUMMA: QUIA PONERE TOTUM NESCIET.] The obſervation holds of *ſtatuary*, as the poet hath ſhewn, and indeed of every art, that hath a *whole* for its object. *Nicias*, the painter, uſed to ſay[a], "That the *ſubject* was to him, what the fable is to the poet." Which is juſt the ſentiment of *Horace*, reverſed. For by the *ſubject* is meant the whole of the painter's plan, the *totum*,

[a] See *Victor. Comm. in Dem. Phaler.* p. 73. *Florent.* 1594.

which

which it will be impoſſible for thoſe to expreſs, who lay out their pains ſo ſollicitouſly in finiſhing ſingle parts. Thus to take an obvious example, the landſkip-painter is to draw together, and form into *one* entire view, certain beautiful, or ſtriking objects. This is his main care. It is not even eſſential to the merit of his piece to labour, with extreme exactneſs, the principal conſtituent parts. But for the reſt, a *ſhrub* or *flower*, a ſtraggling *goat* or *ſheep*, theſe may be touched very negligently. We have a great modern inſtance. Few painters have known to furniſh *finer* ſcenes, or have poſſeſſed the art of combining *woods*, *lakes*, and *rocks*, into more agreeable pictures, than G. POUSSIN: Yet his *animals* are obſerved to be ſcarce worthy an ordinary artiſt. The uſe of theſe is *ſimply* to decorate the ſcene, and ſo their beauty depends, not on the truth and correctneſs of the *drawing*, but on the elegance of their *diſpoſition* only. For, in a landſkip, the eye careleſly glances over the ſmaller parts, and regards them only in reference to the ſurrounding objects. The painter's labour therefore is loſt, or rather miſemployed, to the prejudice of the *whole*, when it ſtrives to finiſh, ſo minutely, *particular* objects. If ſome great maſters have ſhewn themſelves ambitious of this fame, the objects, they have laboured, have been always ſuch, as are moſt conſiderable in themſelves, and have, beſides, an *effect* in illuſtrating and ſetting off the entire ſcenery. It is chiefly in this view, that

Ruiſdale's

Ruiſdale's *waters*, and Claude Lorain's *ſkies* are ſo admirable.

40. —CUI LECTA POTENTER ERIT RES.] *Potenter*, i. e. κατὰ δύναμιν, *Lambin:* which gives a pertinent ſenſe, but without juſtifying the expreſſion. The learned editor of Statius propoſes to read *pudenter*, a word uſed by Horace on other occaſions, and which ſuits the meaning of the place, as well. A ſimilar paſſage in the epiſtle to Auguſtus adds ſome weight to this conjecture;

nec meus audet
REM *tentare* PUDOR, *quem vires ferre recuſent.*

45. HOC AMET, HOC SPERNAT, PROMISSI CARMINIS AUCTOR—IN VERBIS ETIAM TENUIS CAUTUSQUE SERENDIS.] Dr. Bentley hath inverted the order of theſe two lines; not merely, as I conceive, without ſufficient reaſon, but in prejudice alſo to the ſcope and tenor of the poet's ſenſe; in which caſe only I allow myſelf to depart from his text. The whole precept, on poetical diſtribution, is delivered, as of importance:

[*Ordinis hæc virtus erit et venus, aut ego fallor.*]

And ſuch indeed it is: for, 1. It reſpects no leſs than the conſtitution of a *whole*, i. e. the reduction of a ſubject into one entire, conſiſtent plan: the moſt momentous and difficult of all the offices of *invention*, and

and which is more immediately addreſſed, in the high and ſublime ſenſe of the word, to the POET. 2. 'Tis no trivial *whole*, which the precept had in view, but, as the context ſhews, and as is further apparent from ℣ 150, where this topic is reſumed and treated more at large, the *epos* and the *drama*. With what propriety then is a rule of ſuch dignity inforced by that ſtrong emphatic concluſion,

Hoc amet, hoc ſpernat promiſſi carminis auctor:

i. e. "Be this rule held ſacred and inviolate by him, "who hath projected and engaged in a work, de- "ſerving the appellation of a poem." Were the ſubject only the choice or invention of *words*, the ſolemnity of ſuch an application muſt be ridiculous.

As for the conſtruction, the commoneſt reader can find himſelf at no loſs to defend it againſt the force of the Doctor's objections.

46. IN VERBIS ETIAM TENUIS, &c.] I have ſaid, that theſe preparatory obſervations concerning an *unity* of deſign, the *abuſe of language*, and the different *colorings* of the ſeveral ſpecies of poetry, whilſt they extend to poetic compoſition at *large*, more particularly reſpect the caſe of the *drama*. This has been ſhewn already in reſpect of the *firſt* of theſe articles in note on ℣ 34. The *laſt* will be conſidered in note on ℣ 73. I will here ſhew the ſame of the *ſecond*, concerning the *abuſe of words*. For 1. the ſtyle of the drama repreſenting real life, and demanding,

ing, on that account, a peculiar eaſe and familiarity in the language, the practice of coining *new* words muſt be more inſufferable in *this*, than in any other ſpecies of poetry. The majeſty of the epic will even ſometimes require to be ſupported by this means, when the commoneſt ear would reſent it, as downright affectation upon the ſtage. Hence the peculiar propriety of this rule to the dramatic writer,

In verbis etiam tenuis cautuſque ſerendis.

2. Next, it is neceſſary to keep the tragic ſtyle, though condeſcending, in ſome ſort, to the familiar caſt of converſation, from ſinking beneath the dignity of the perſonages, and the ſolemnity of the repreſentation. Now no expedient can more happily effect this, than what the poet preſcribes concerning the *poſition* and *derivation* of words. For thus, the language, without incurring the odium of abſolutely *invented* terms, ſuſtains itſelf in a becoming ſtatelineſs and reſerve, and, whilſt it ſeems to keep to the level of converſation, artfully eludes the meanneſs of a trite, proſaic ſtyle. I will add, that were theſe two directions, 1. concerning the poſition of *known* words, and, 2. an eaſy deduction of *new* ones from the learned languages, carefully obſerved (to which end the ſtudy of Shakeſpear, who, of all the moderns, hath moſt ſucceſsfully practiſed this ſecret, would be highly ſerviceable) they would unqueſtionably furniſh a more natural and truly dramatic language,

than

than is, at preſent, in uſe amongſt the writers for the ſtage.

Dixeris egregiè, notum ſi callida verbum
Reddiderit junctura novum.
Et nova fictaque nuper habebunt verba fidem, ſi
Græco fonte cadent, parcè detorta.

48. —SI FORTE NECESSE EST—INDICIIS MONSTRARE RECENTIBUS. &c.] *Uſitatis* [*verbis*] *tutius utimur: nova non ſine quodam periculo fingimus.* [Quintil. l. i. c. v.] Accordingly, we are told, *Salluſtii verborum fingendi et novandi ſtudium dum multâ prorſus invidiâ fuit.* [A. Gell. Noct. Attic. l. iv. c. xv.] Yet this hinders not, but that it may be ſometimes proper to hazard the experiment: *Audendum tamen; namque, ut Cicero ait, etiam quæ primò dura viſa ſunt, uſu molliuntur.* [Quinct. ib.]

70. MULTA RENASCENTUR, QUAE JAM CECIDERE.] This *revival* of *old* words is one of thoſe *niceties* in compoſition, not to be attempted by any but great maſters. It may be done two ways, 1. by reſtoring ſuch terms, as are grown entirely obſolete; or, 2. by ſelecting out of thoſe, which have ſtill a currency, and are not quite laid aſide, ſuch as are moſt forcible and expreſſive. For ſo I underſtand a paſſage in Cicero, who urges this double uſe of old words, as an argument, to his orator, for the diligent ſtudy of the old Latin writers. His words are theſe:

theſe: *Loquendi elegantia, quanquam expolitur ſcientiâ literarum, tamen augetur legendis oratoribus* [*veteribus*] *et poetis: ſunt enim illi veteres, qui ornare nondum poterant ea, quæ dicebant, omnes prope præclare locuti —Neque tamen erit utendum verbis iis quibus jam conſuetudo noſtra non utitur, niſi quando ornandi cauſâ, parcè, quod oſtendam; ſed uſitatis ita poterit uti, lectiſſimis ut utatur, is, qui in veteribus erit ſcriptis ſtudioſè et multum volutatus.* De Orat. l. iii. c. x.] Theſe *choice* words amongſt ſuch as are ſtill in *uſe*, I take to be thoſe which are employed by the old writers in ſome peculiarly ſtrong and energetic ſenſe, yet ſo as with good advantage to be copied by the moderns, without appearing barbarous or affected. [See HOR. lib. ii. ep. ii. ℣ 115.] The other uſe of old terms, *i. e.* when become *obſolete*, he ſays, muſt be made *parcè*, more ſparingly. The contrary would, in oratory, be inſufferable affectation. The rule holds in poetry, but with greater latitude; for, as he obſerves in another place, and the reaſon of the the thing ſpeaks, *hæc ſunt Poetarum licentiæ liberiora.* [De Or. iii. 38.] But the elegance of the ſtyle, we are told, is increaſed both ways. The reaſon is, according to Quinctilian (who was perfectly of Cicero's mind in this matter. See l. x. c. i.) *Verba à vetuſtate repetita afferunt orationi majeſtatem aliquam non ſine delectatione; nam & auctoritatem antiquitatis habent; &, quia intermiſſa ſunt, gratiam novitati ſimilem parant.* [Lib. i. c. vi. ſub fin.] But this is not

not all: The riches of a language are actually increaſed by retaining its old words; and beſides, they have often a greater real weight and dignity, than thoſe of a more faſhionable caſt, which ſucceed to them. This needs no proof to ſuch as are verſed in the earlier writings in *any* language. A very capable judge hath obſerved it in regard of the moſt admired *modern* ones: *Nous avons tellement laiſſé ce qui étoit au viel françois, que nous avons laiſſé quant la plus part de ce qu'il avoit de bon.* [Trait. préparatif à l'Apol. pour Herod. l. i. c. xxviii.] Or, if the reader requires a more deciſive teſtimony, let him take that of the excellent Fenelon. *Nôtre langue manque d'un grand nombre de mots et de phraſes. Il me ſemble même qu'on l'a genée et appauvrie depuis environ cent ans, en voulant la purifier. Il eſt vrai qu'elle étoit encore un peu informe et trop verbeuſe. Mais le vieux language ſe fait regretter, quand nous le retrouvons dans* MAROT, *dans* AMIOT, *dans le Cardinal d'*OSSAT, *dans les ouvrages les plus enjouez, et dans les plus ſerieux. Il y avoit je ne ſçai quoi de court, de näif, de vif et de paſſioné.* [Reflex. ſur la Rhetotique, Amſt. 1733. p. 4.] From theſe teſtimonies we learn the exreme value, which theſe great maſters of compoſition ſet upon their old writers; and as the reaſon of the thing juſtifies their opinions, we may further ſee the important uſe of ſome late attempts to reſtore a better knowledge of our *own*. Which I obſerve with pleaſure, as the growing prevalency

valency of a very different humour, firſt catched, as it ſhould ſeem, from our commerce with the French models, and countenanced by the too ſcrupulous delicacy of ſome good writers amongſt ourſelves, had gone far towards unnerving the nobleſt modern language, and effeminating the public taſte. This was not a little forwarded by, what generally makes its appearance at the ſame time, a kind of feminine curioſity in the choice of words; cautiouſly avoiding and reprobating all ſuch (which were not ſeldom the moſt expreſſive) as had been prophaned by too vulgar uſe, or had ſuffered the touch of ſome other accidental taint. This ran us into periphraſis and general expreſſion; the peculiar bane of every poliſhed language. Whereas the rhetorician's judgment here again ſhould direct us *Omnia verba (exceptis paucis parum verecundis) ſunt alicubi optima; nam et humilibus interim et vulgaribus eſt opus, et quæ cultiore in parte videnter ſordida, ubi res poſcit, propriè dicuntur.* Which ſeems borrowed from Dionyſius of Halicarnaſſus [περ. συνθεσ. § xii.] ἐδὲν ὕτω ταπεινὸν, ἢ ῥυπαρὸν, ἢ μιαρὸν, ἢ ἄλλην τινὰ δυσχέρειαν ἔχον ἔσεσθαί φημι λόγῳ μόριον, ᾧ σημαίνεταί τι σῶμα ἢ πρᾶγμα, ὃ μηδεμίαν ἕξει χῶραν ἐπιτηδείαν ἐν λόγοις. However thoſe two cauſes, "The rejection "of old words, as barbarous, and of many modern "ones, as unpolite," had ſo exhauſted the ſtrength and ſtores of our language, that, as I obſerved, it was high time for ſome maſter-hand to interpoſe and ſend

ſend us for ſupplies to our old poets; which, there is the higheſt authority for ſaying, no one ever deſpiſed, but for a reaſon, not very conſiſtent with his credit to avow: *rudem enim eſſe omnino in noſtris poetis aut inertiſſimæ ſegnitiæ eſt aut faſtidii delicatiſſimi.* [Cic. de fin. l. 1. c. ii.]

72. —SI VOLET USUS, &c.] *Conſuetudo certiſſima loquendi magiſtra; utendumque planè ſermone, ut nummo, qui publica forma eſt.* [Quinctil. l. i. c. vi.] imitated from Horace.

73. RES GESTAE, &c.] The purport of theſe lines [from ℣ 73 to 86] and their connection with what follows, hath not been fully ſeen. They would expreſs this general propoſition, "That the ſeveral kinds of "poetry eſſentially differ from each other, as may be "gathered, not ſolely from their different ſubjects, "but their different meaſures; which good ſenſe, "and an attention to the peculiar natures of each, "inſtructed the great inventors and maſters of them "to employ." The uſe made of this propoſition is to infer, "That therefore the like attention ſhould "be had to the different ſpecies of the *ſame kind* of "poetry [℣ 89, &c.] as in the caſe of tragedy and "comedy (to which the application is made) whoſe "peculiar differences and correſpondencies, as re-"ſulting from the natures of each, ſhould, in agree-

" ment to the univerſal law of *decorum*, be exactly " known and diligently obſerved by the poet."

Singula quæque locum teneant ſortita decentem. ℣ 92.

But, there is a further propriety in this enumeration of the ſeveral kinds of poetry, as addreſſed to the dramatic writer. He is not only to ſtudy, for the purpoſes here explained, the characteriſtic differences of either ſpecies of the drama: He muſt further be knowing in the other *kinds* of poetry, ſo as to be able, as the nature of his work will demand, to adopt the genius of each, in its turn, and to tranſfer the graces of univerſal poetry into the drama. Thus, to follow the diviſion here laid down, there will ſometimes be occaſion for the pomp and high *coloring* of the EPIC narration; ſometimes for the plaintive ſoftneſs and paſſionate inconnection of the ELEGY: and the chorus, if characterized in the antient manner, muſt catch the fiery, inraptured ſpirit of the ODE.

Deſcriptas ſervare vices operumque colores,
Cur ego, ſi neque ignoroque, POETA *ſalutor?*

Hence is ſeen the truth of that remark, which there hath been more than once occaſion to make, " That, " however general theſe prefatory inſtructions may ap- " pear, they more eſpecially reſpect the caſe of the " *drama*."

90. IN-

90. INDIGNATUR ITEM. &c.]—COENA THYESTAE.] *Il met le ſouper de Thyeſte pour toutes ſortes de tragedies*, ſays M. Dacier, with whom agrees the whole band of commentators: but why this ſubject ſhould be ſingled out, as the repreſentative of the reſt, is no where explained by any of them. We may be ſure, it was not taken up at random. The reaſon was, that the Thyeſtes of Ennius was peculiarly chargeable with the fault, here cenſured: as is plain from a curious paſſage in the *Orator*; where Cicero, ſpeaking of the looſe numbers of certain poets, obſerves this, in particular, of the tragedy of Thyeſtes, *Similia ſunt quædam apud noſtros: velut in Thyeſte,*

Quemnam te eſſe dicam? qui tardâ in ſenectute.

et quæ ſequuntur: quæ, niſi cùm tibicen acceſſerit, ORATIONE SUNT SOLUTAE SIMILLIMAE: which character exactly agrees to *this* of Horace, wherein the language of that play is cenſured, as flat and proſaic, and hardly riſing above the plain narrative of an ordinary converſation in comedy. This alluſion to a particular play, written by one of their beſt poets, and frequently exhibited on the Roman ſtage, gives great force and ſpirit to the precept, at the ſame time that it exemplifies it in the happieſt manner. It ſeems further probable to me, that the poet alſo deſigned an indirect compliment to *Varius*, whoſe Thyeſtes, we are told, [*Quinctil.* l. x. c. i.]

was not inferior to any tragedy of the Greeks. This double intention of theſe lines well ſuited the poet's general aim, which is ſeen through all his critical works, of beating down the exceſſive admiration of the old poets, and of aſſerting and advancing the juſt honours of the deſerving moderns. It may further be obſerved that the critics have not felt the force of the words *exponi* and *narrari* in this precept. They are admirably choſen to expreſs the two faults condemned: the firſt implying a kind of pomp and oſtentation in the language, which is therefore improper for the low ſubjects of comedy: and the latter, as I have hinted, a flat, proſaic expreſſion, not above the caſt of a common *narrative*, and therefore equally unfit for tragedy. Nothing can be more rambling than the comment of Heinſius and Dacier on this laſt word.

92. SINGULA QUAEQUE LOCUM, &c.] Copied by the Rhetorician; *Sua cuique propoſita lex, ſuus cuique decor eſt. Nec comœdia in cothurnos aſſurgit, nec contrà tragœdia ſocco ingreditur. Habet tamen omnis eloquentia aliquid commune. Id imitemur, quod commune eſt.* [Quinct. l. x. c. ii.

94. IRATUSQUE CHREMES TUMIDO DILITIGAT ORE: ET TRAGICUS PLERUMQUE DOLET SERMONE PEDESTRI.] It may not be amiſs to open a little more particularly the grounds of this criticiſm; which

which may beſt be done by a commentary on the following lines of the poet.

Format enim natura priùs nos intùs ad omnem
Fortunarum habitum; juvat aut impellit ad iram;
Aut ad humum mœrore gravi deducit & angit:
Pòſt effert animi motus interprete linguâ:

To *draw* after the life, in any given conjuncture, the poet muſt recollect (which may eaſily be done by conſulting with his own conſcious experience) that *peculiar diſpoſition* of mind, into which the ſpeaker is, of neceſſity, carried by the circumſtances of his ſituation. And the *ſentiments*, which give the image of this peculiar diſpoſition, are the genuine lineaments of the character intended.

But the *truth* of ſentiment may be hurt or effaced by incongruous language, juſt as the exacteſt lineaments of a portrait are often diſguiſed or loſt under a vicious coloring. To *paint* then as well as draw after the truth, it is requiſite that a further and diligent regard be had to the *expreſſion*. Which again is no great difficulty for the true artiſt, the ſame common nature holding the torch to him, as before. For in entering into ourſelves we find, that as the mind, in any ſuppoſed ſituation, gives birth to a *certain* ſet of conceptions and ſentiments, correſpondent to its true ſtate, and expreſſive of it: ſo by attending to the *language*, in which thoſe ſentiments ordinarily manifeſt themſelves, we eaſily perceive they take *one* ſtyle or manner of expreſſion preferably to every other.

For *expreſſion*, where falſe art is not employed to diſtort it, gives the juſt image of our *ſentiments*, juſt as *theſe*, when nature is not ſuppreſſed or counteracted, are ever the faithful repreſentatives of the *manners*. They reſult, like the famous *Simulacra* of Epicurus, as by a ſecret deſtination, from their *original forms*; and are, *each*, the perfect copies of *other*. All which will be clearly underſtood by applying theſe general obſervations to the inſtances in view.

The paſſion of ANGER rouſes all the native fire and energy of the ſoul. In this diſorder, and, as it were, inſurrection of the mental powers, our ſentiments are ſtrong and vigorous; nature prompting us to liberal and lofty conceptions of ourſelves, and a ſuperior diſdainful regard of others. This again determines the *genius* of our language, which, to conform to ſuch ſentiments, muſt be bold and animated; breaking out into forcible imagery, and ſwelling in all the pomp of ſounding epithets and violent figures. And this even amidſt the humbler concerns of private and inferior fortunes:

Iratuſque Chremes TUMIDO DILITIGAT ORE.

In the paſſion of GRIEF, on the contrary, the reverſe of this takes place. For the mind, oppreſſed and weighed down by its ſorrows, ſinks into a weak and timorous deſpondency; inclining us to ſubmit, almoſt without reſiſtance, to the incumbent affliction; or if we ſtruggle at all with it, it is only to eaſe the labouring

labouring heart by putting forth ſome fruitleſs ſighs and ineffectual complainings. Thus we find it repreſented by thoſe perfect maſters of ſimple nature, the Greek tragedians. So far are their ſorrowing perſonages from entertaining any vigorous thoughts or manly reſolutions, that they conſtantly languiſh into ſad repinings at their preſent, and trembling apprehenſions of future, miſery.

When theſe ſentiments come to expreſs themſelves in *words*, what can they be but the plaineſt and ſimpleſt which the language of the complainant furniſhes? Such negligence, or more properly ſuch dejection, of ſorrow diſpoſes the ſpeaker to take up with terms as humble as his fortune. His feeble conception is not only unapt or unable to look out for fine words and painted phraſes; but, if chance throw them in his way, he even rejects them as trappings of another condition, and which ſerve only to upbraid his preſent wretchedneſs. The pomp of numbers and pride of *poetic* expreſſion are ſo little his care, that it is well if he even trouble himſelf to obſerve the ordinary exactneſs of *mere proſe*[b]. And this even where the height of rank and importance of affairs conſpire to elevate the mind to more ſtate and dignity.

Et tragicus plerumque DOLET SERMONE PEDESTRI.

[b] The reader may ſee a fine ſpeech in the Cyropædia of Xenophon [l. iv.] where not ſo much as this is obſerved.

Thus far the dramatic writer may inform himſelf by entering into his own *conſciouſneſs*, and obſerving the ſure dictates of experience. For what concerns the ſucceſsful application of this rule in *practice*, every thing, as is remarked below, [on ℣ 102.] muſt depend on the conſtitution of his own mind; which yet may be much aſſiſted by the diligent ſtudy of thoſe writers, who excel moſt in this kind: in which claſs all agree to give the palm to EURIPIDES.

95. ET TRAGICUS PLERUMQUE DOLET SERMONE PEDESTRI.] Dr. Bentley connects this with the following line:

[*Et tragicus plerumque dolet ſermone pedeſtri*
Telephus aut Peleus.]

for the ſake, as he ſays, of *preſerving the oppoſition. In comœdiâ iratus Chremes tumido, in tragœdiâ Telephus pauper humili ſermone utitur.* This is ſpecious; but, if the reader attends, he will perceive, that the oppoſition is better preſerved without his connection. For it will ſtand thus: The poet firſt aſſerts of comedy at large, *that it ſometimes raiſes its voice,*

Interdum tamen & vocem comœdia tollit.

Next he confirms this general remark by appealing to a particular inſtance,

Iratuſque Chremes tumido dilitigat ore.

Exactneſs of *oppoſition* will require the ſame method to be obſerved in ſpeaking of *tragedy*; which accordingly

cordingly is the caſe, if we follow the vulgar reading. For, firſt, it is ſaid of *tragedy*, that, when grief is to be expreſſed, it generally condeſcends to an humbler ſtrain,

Et tragicus plerumque dolet ſermone pedeſtri.

And then the general truth, as before, is illuſtrated by a particular inſtance,

Telephus aut Peleus, cum pauper & exul uterque,
Projicit ampullas, &c.

There is no abſurdity, as the Doctor pretends, in taking *tragicus* for *tragœdiarum ſcriptor*. For the poet, by a common figure, is made to do that, which he repreſents his perſons, as doing.

But this is not the whole, that will deſerve the reader's regard in this place. A ſtrict attention to the ſcope and turn of the paſſage [from ℣ 96 to 114] will lead him to conclude, 1. "That ſome real "tragedy of Telephus and Peleus was intended in "℣ 96, in which the characters were duly preſerved "and ſet forth in proper language." This the oppoſition to the *Chremes* of Terence abſolutely demands. Let us inquire what this might be. *Euripides*, we know, compoſed tragedies under theſe names; but it is unlikely, the poet ſhould contraſt the inſtance of a *Greek* tragedy to a *Latin* comedy. Nor need it be ſuppoſed. The ſubject was familiar to the Roman poets. For we find a *Telephus* aſcribed to no leſs than three of them, *Ennius*, *Accius*, and *Nævius*.

Nævius[c]. One of theſe then, I doubt not, is here intended. But the Roman, in thoſe times, were little more than tranſlations of the Greek plays. Hence it is moſt likely, that the tragedy of *Telephus* (and probably of *Peleus*, though we have not ſo direct authority for this) was, in fact, the tragedy of *Euripides*, tranſlated into Latin, and accommodated to the Roman ſtage, by one of theſe writers. It remains only to enquire, if the *Telephus* itſelf of *Euripides* anſwered to this character. Which, I think, it manifeſtly did, from conſidering what his enemy, the buffoon Ariſtophanes, hath ſaid concerning it. Every body knows, that the ΒΑΤΡΑΧΟΙ of this poet contains a direct ſatyr, and burleſque upon *Euripides*. Some part of it is particularly levelled againſt his *Telephus*: whence we may certainly learn the objections, that were made to it. Yet the amount of them is only this, "That he had drawn the character "of *Telephus* in too many circumſtances of diſtreſs "and humiliation." His fault was, that he had repreſented him more like a beggar, than an unfortunate prince. Which, in more candid hands, would, I ſuppoſe, amount only to this, "That the poet "had painted his diſtreſs in the moſt natural, and "affecting manner." He had ſtripped him of his royalty, and, together with it of the pomp and oſtentation of the regal language, the very beauty, which Horace applauds and admires in his *Telephus*.

[c] See *Robert Stephens's Fragm. Poet. Vet. Latinorum.*

2. Next, I think it as clear from what follows, "That ſome real tragedy of *Telephus*, and *Peleus*, "was alſo glanced at, of a different ſtamp from the "other, and in which the characters were not ſup-"ported by ſuch propriety of language." Let the reader judge. Having quoted a *Telephus* and *Peleus*, as examples to the rule concerning the ſtyle of tragedy, and afterwards enlarged [from ℣ 98 to 103] on the reaſons of their excellence, he returns, with an air of inſult, to the ſame names, apoſtrophizing them in the following manner:

Telephe, vel Peleu, male ſi mandata loquêris,
Aut dormitabo aut ridebo:

But why this addreſs to *characters*, which he had before alledged, as examples of true dramatical *drawing?* Would any tolerable writer, after having applauded Shakeſpear's King *Lear*, as an inſtance of the kingly character in diſtreſs, naturally painted, apoſtrophize it, with ſuch pointed vehemence, on the contrary ſuppoſition? But let this paſs. The Poet, as though a notorious violation of the critic's rules was to be throughly expoſed and corrected, goes on, in the ſeven following lines, to ſearch into the bottom of this affair, laying open the ſource and ground of his judgment; and concludes upon the whole,

Si dicentis erunt fortunis abſona dicta,
ROMANI TOLLENT EQUITESQUE PATRESQUE CACHINNUM.

Can

Can any thing be plainer, than that this laſt line points at ſome well known inſtance of a Latin play, which had provoked, upon this account, the contempt and laughter of the beſt judges? It may further be obſerved, that this way of underſtanding the paſſage before us, as it is more conformable to what is here ſhewn to be the general ſcope of the epiſtle, ſo doth it, in its turn, likewiſe countenance, or rather clearly ſhews, the truth and certainty of this method of interpretation.

99. NON SATIS EST PULCHRA, &c.] Dr. Bentley objects to *pulchra*, becauſe this, he ſays, is a general term, including under it every ſpecies of beauty, and therefore that of *dulcis* or the *affecting*. As if *general* terms were not frequently reſtrained and determined to a *peculiar* ſenſe by the context. But the great critic did not ſufficiently attend to the connection, which, as F. Robortellus, in his paraphraſe on the epiſtle, well obſerves, ſtands thus: "It is not enough, that tragedies have that kind of "beauty, which ariſes from a pomp and ſplendor of "diction, they muſt alſo be pathetic or affecting." *Objiciat ſe mihi hoc loco aliquis et dicat, ſi id fiat* [*i e.* ſi projiciantur ampullæ] *corrumpi omnem venuſtatem & gravitatem poematis tragici, quod nihil niſi grande et elatum recipit. Huic ego ita reſpondendum puto, non ſatis eſſe, ut poemata venuſta ſint et dignitatem ſuam ſervent: nam dulcedine quoque et ſuavitate quâdam*

ſunt

ſunt conſpergenda, ut poſſint auditoris animum inflectere in quancunque voluerint partem.

But a very ingenious perſon, who knows how to unite philoſophy with criticiſm; and to all that is elegant in *taſte*, to add what is moſt juſt and accurate in *ſcience*, hath, in the following note, ſhewn the very foundation of Dr. Bentley's criticiſm to be erroneous.

"There are a multitude of words in every language, which are ſometimes uſed in a *wider*, ſometimes in a *more reſtrained* ſenſe. Of this kind are καλὸν of the Greeks, the *pulchrum* of the Romans, and the words by which they are tranſlated in modern languages. To whatever ſubjects theſe epithets are applied, we always intend to ſignify that they give us *pleaſure:* and we ſeldom apply them to any ſubjects, but thoſe which pleaſe by means of impreſſions made on the fancy: *including* under this name the reception of images conveyed directly by the ſight itſelf. As Poetry therefore always addreſſes itſelf to the imagination, every ſpecies of *poetical excellence* obtains the name of *Beauty:* and among the reſt, the power of pleaſing us by affecting the *paſſions*; an effect which intirely depends on the various images preſented to our view. In this ſenſe of the word *beautiful*, it cannot be oppoſed to *pathetic*. *Pulchrum enim quaſcunque carminis virtutes, etiam ipſam* dulcedinem, *in ſe continere meritò videatur.*

But nothing, I think, can be plainer, than that this epithet is often uſed more *determinately*. Viſible forms

forms are not merely occaſions of pleaſure, in common with other objects but they produce a pleaſure of a ſingular kind. And the power they have of producing it, is properly denominated by the name of *Beauty*. Whether Regularity and Variety have been rightly aſſigned, as the circumſtances on which it depends, is a queſtion which in this place we need not conſider. It cannot at leaſt be denied, that we make a diſtinction among the objects of ſight; of which ſome are beheld with delight, others with averſion: that the ſame diſtinction occurs among the pictures of theſe objects in the mind, when the things themſelves are removed from our view: and that we annex the names of Beauty and Deformity to different objects and different pictures, in conſequence of theſe perceptions. I aſk then, what is meant, when the words are thus applied? Is it only that we are *pleaſed* or *diſpleaſed?* This ſurely cannot be ſaid. For the epithets would then be applied with equal propriety to the objects of different ſenſes: and the fragrance of a flower, for inſtance, would be a ſpecies of beauty; the bitterneſs of wormwood a ſpecies of deformity.—Do we then mean, that we receive pleaſure and pain by means of the *Imagination?* We may indeed mean *this:* but we certainly mean *more* than this. For the ſame names are uſed and applied, in a manner perfectly ſimilar, by numbers of perſons who never once thought of this artificial method of diſtinguiſhing their ideas. There is then ſome kind of perception, common to them and us, which has occaſioned

caſioned this uniformity in our ways of ſpeaking: and whether you will chuſe to conſider the perceptive faculty as reſulting only from habit, or allow it the name of a *Senſe* of Beauty; whether theſe perceptions can, or cannot, be reſolved into ſome *general* principle, imagination of private advantage, or ſympathy with others, are, in the preſent caſe, circumſtances wholly indifferent.

If it be admitted that the epithets of which we are ſpeaking were originally uſed in this reſtrained ſenſe, it is eaſy to ſee that they would readily obtain the more *extended* ſignification. For the ſpecies of pleaſure to which they were firſt confined, was found always to ariſe from images impreſſed on the fancy: what then more natural, than to apply the ſame words to every ſpecies of pleaſure reſulting from the imagination, and to every ſpecies of images productive of pleaſure? Thus the *beauty* of a human perſon might originally ſignify ſuch combinations of figure and colour, as produced the *peculiar* perception above-mentioned. *Pulchritudo corporis* (ſays Cicero) *aptâ compoſitione membrorum movet oculos, & eo ipſo delectat, &c.*—But from this ſignification to the other the tranſition was eaſy and obvious. If every beautiful form gave pleaſure, every pleaſing form might come to be called beautiful: not becauſe the ſame perceptions are excited by *all* (the pleaſures being apparently different) but becauſe they are all excited in the ſame manner. And this is confirm'd by a diſtinction which every one underſtands between beauties

ties of the *regular* and *irregular* kind. When we would diſtinguiſh theſe from each other, we call the latter *agreeable*, and leave to the former only the name of *beautiful:* that is, we confine the latter term to its proper and original ſenſe.—In much the ſame manner objects *not viſible* may ſometimes obtain the name of beauty, for no other reaſon than becauſe the imagination is agreeably employ'd about them; and we may ſpeak of a beautiful *character*, as well as a beautiful *perſon:* by no means intending that we have the ſame *feeling* from the one as the other, but that in both caſes we are *pleaſed*, and that in both the *imagination* contributes to the pleaſure.

Now as every *repreſentative art* is capable of affording us pleaſure, and this pleaſure is occaſioned by images impreſſed on the fancy; every pleaſing production of art, will of courſe obtain the name of beautiful. Yet this hinders us not from conſidering beauty as a *diſtinct* excellence in ſuch productions. For we may diſtinguiſh, either in a picture or poem, between the pleaſures we receive directly from the imitation of *viſible forms*, and thoſe which principally depend on *other* kinds of imitation: And we may conſider viſible forms themſelves either as *occaſions* of pleaſure, in *common* with other objects; or as yielding us that *peculiar* delight which they alone are capable of yielding. If we uſe the word beautiful in this *limited* ſenſe, it is very intelligibly oppoſed to *pathetic*. Images of Groves, Fields, Rocks and Water, afford us a pleaſure extremely different from that which we find

in

in the indulgence of our *tender affections:* nor can there be any danger of confounding the agreeable perception received from a maſterly ſtatue of an Apollo or a Venus, with that which ariſes from a repreſentation of the *terrors* men feel under a ſtorm or a plague.

It is no objection to what has been ſaid, that the objects we call *beautiful* may alſo in ſome caſes be occaſions of *paſſion.* The ſight, for inſtance, of a beautiful perſon may give birth to the paſſion of Love: yet to perceive the beauty and to feel the paſſion are two different things. For every beautiful object does not produce love in every obſerver, and the ſame paſſion is ſometimes excited by objects not beautiful; I mean not called beautiful by the perſons themſelves who are affected by them. And the diſtinction between theſe feelings, would receive further confirmation (if indeed there could be any doubt of it) from obſerving that people frequently ſpeak of beauty, and as far as appears intelligibly, in perſons of their *own ſex*; who feel perhaps no *paſſion* but that of *envy:* which will not ſurely be thought the ſame with the perception of *beauty.*

I ſee then no objection to the text of Horace, as it ſtood before Dr. B.'s emendation: unleſs it ſhould be thought an impropriety to oppoſe two epithets which are *capable* of being underſtood in ſenſes *not oppoſite.* But there is not the leaſt ground for this imagination. For when a word of uncertain ſignifi-

cation is *oppoſed* to another whoſe ſignification is certain; the oppoſition itſelf *determines* the ſenſe. The word *day* in one of its ſenſes includes the whole ſpace of twenty-four hours: yet it is not ſurely an impropriety to oppoſe *day* to *night*.—In like manner the words *pulchra poemata*, if we were not directed by the context might ſignify *good poems* in general: but when the beauty of a poem is *diſtinguiſhed* from other excellences, this diſtinction will lead us to confine our idea to *beautiful imagery*; and it is perfectly agreeable to the ſentiments which Horace expreſſes in other places, to declare that this kind of merit is *inſufficient* in *dramatic* writers, from whom we expect a pleaſure of a very different kind. Indeed the moſt exquiſite painting, if it is not conſtantly ſubordinate to this higher end, becomes not only inſufficient, but *impertinent:* ſerving only to divert the attention, and interrupt the courſe of the paſſions.

It may ſeem perhaps that the force of a *Latin* expreſſion cannot be aſcertain'd from theſe general reflections, but muſt be gather'd from citations of particular paſſages. And this indeed is true with regard to the *peculiarities* of the language. But the queſtion before us is of a different kind. It is a queſtion of *Philoſophy* rather than *Criticiſm:* as depending on thoſe differences of ideas, which are mark'd by ſimilar forms of expreſſion in *all* languages."

102. SI VIS ME FLERE, DOLENDUM EST PRIMUM IPSI TIBI :] *Tragedy*, as [d] one ſaid, who had a heart to feel its tendereſt emotions, *ſheweth forth the ulcers that are covered with tiſſue*. In order to awaken and call forth in the ſpectator all thoſe ſympathies, which naturally await on the lively exhibition of ſuch a ſcene, the writer muſt have a ſoul *tuned* to the moſt exquiſite ſenſibility, and ſuſceptible of the ſame vibrations from his own created images, which are known to *ſhake* the ſufferer in real life. This is ſo uncommon a pitch of humanity, that 'tis no wonder, ſo few have ſucceeded in this *trying* part of the drama. Euripides, of all the antients, had moſt of this ſympathetic tenderneſs in his nature, and accordingly we find him, without a rival in this praiſe. Τραγικώτατος τῶν ποιητῶν, ſays Ariſtotle of him [Περ. ποιητ. κ. ιγ.] and to the ſame purpoſe another great critic, *In affectibus cum omnibus mirus, tum in iis, qui* MISERATIONE *conſtant, facilè præcipuus.* [Quinct. L. x. c. i.] They, who apply themſelves to expreſs the *pitiable* ἐλεεινὸν in tragedy, would do well to examine their own hearts by this rule, before they preſume to practiſe upon thoſe of others. See, further, this remark applied by Cicero to the ſubject of oratory, and inforced with his uſual elegance and good ſenſe. [l. ii. c. xlv. *De oratore.*]

[d] Sir *Philip Sidney*.

119. AUT FAMAM SEQUERE, &c.] The connection lies thus: *Language* muſt agree with *character*; *character* with *fame*, or at leaſt with *itſelf*.

123. SIT MEDEA FEROX INVICTAQUE,] Horace took this inſtance from Euripides, where the *unconquered fierceneſs* of this character is preſerved in that due mediocrity, which nature and juſt writing demand. The poet, in giving her character, is content to ſay of her,

Βαρεῖα γὰρ φρὴν, ὀδ' ἀνέξεἰαι κακῶς
Πασχεσ'

And

Δεινὴ γάρ. ἤ τοι ῥαδίως γε συμβαλὼν
Ἐχθράν τις αὐτῇ, καλλίνικον οἴσεται.

And ſhe herſelf, when opening to the chorus her laſt horrid purpoſe, ſays fiercely indeed, but not frantically:

Μηδείς με φάυλην κἀσθενῆ νομιζέτω
Μηδ' ἡσυχαίαν.

And this is *nature*, which Seneca not perceiving, and yet willing to write up to the critic's rule, hath outraged her character beyond all bounds, and, inſtead of a reſolute, revengeful woman, hath made of her a downright fury. Hence her paſſion is wrought up to a greater height in the very firſt ſcene of the Latin

Latin play, than it ever reaches in the Greek poet. The tenor of her language throughout is,

invadam deos
Et cuncta quatiam.

And hence, in particular, the third and fourth acts expoſe to our view all the horrors of ſorcery (and thoſe too *imaged* to an extravagance) which Euripides, with ſo much better judgment, thought fit entirely to conceal.

126. SERVETUR AD IMUM QUALIS AB INCEPTO PROCESSERIT, ET SIBI CONSTET.] The rule is, as appears from the reaſon of the thing, and from Ariſtotle, "Let an *uniformity* of character be "preſerved, or at leaſt a *conſiſtency*:" i. e. either let the manners be exactly the ſame from the beginning to the end of the play, as thoſe of Medea, for inſtance, and Oreſtes; or, if any change be neceſſary, let it be ſuch as may conſiſt with, and be eaſily reconciled to, the manners formerly attributed; as is ſeen in the caſe of Electra and Iphigenia. We ſhould read then, it is plain,

ſervetur ad imum
Qualis ab incepto proceſſerit, AUT *ſibi conſtet.*

The miſtake aroſe from imagining, that a character could no other way *conſiſt* with itſelf, but by being *uniform*. A miſtake however, which, as I ſaid, not the reaſon of the thing only, but Ariſtotle's rule might

have ſet right. It is expreſſed thus: Τέταρτον δὲ τὸ ὁμαλόν. Κἂν γὰρ ἀνώμαλός τις ᾖ, ὁ τὴν μίμησιν παρέχων καὶ τοιοῦτον ἦθος ὑποτιθεὶς, ὅμως ὁμαλῶς ἀνώμαλον δεῖ εἶναι. Ποιητ. κ. ιε. which laſt words, having been not at all underſtood, have kept his interpreters from ſeeing the true ſenſe and ſcope of the precept. For they have been explained of ſuch characters, as that of *Tigellius* in Horace; which, however proper for ſatyr, or for farcical comedy, are of too fantaſtic and whimſical a nature to be admitted into tragedy; of which Ariſtotle muſt there be chiefly underſtood to ſpeak, and to which Horace, in this place, alone confines himſelf. 'Tis true, indeed, it may be ſaid, that "though a *whimſical* or *fantaſtic* "character be improper for tragedy, an *irreſolute* "one is not. Nothing is finer than a ſtruggle be- "tween different paſſions; and it is perfectly natural, "that in ſuch a circumſtance, each ſhould prevail "by turns." But then there is the wideſt difference between the two caſes. *Tigellius*, with all his fantaſtic irreſolution, is as *uniform* a character, as that of *Mitio*. If the expreſſion may be allowed, its very *inconſiſtency* is of the eſſence of its *uniformity*. On the other hand, Electra, torn with ſundry conflicting paſſions, is moſt apparently, and in the propereſt notion of the word, *ununiform*. One of the ſtrongeſt touches in her character is that of a high, heroic ſpirit, ſenſible to her own, and her family's injuries, and determined, at any rate, to revenge them. Yet

no ſooner is this revenge perpetrated, then ſhe ſoftens, relents, and pities. Here is a manifeſt *ununiformity*, which can, in no proper ſenſe of the expreſſion, lay claim to the critic's ὁμαλὸν, but may be ſo managed, by the poet's ſkill, as to become conſiſtent with the baſis or foundation of her character, that is to be ὁμαλῶς ἀνώμαλον. And that this, in fact, was the meaning of the critic, is plain from the ſimilar example to his own rule, given in the caſe of Iphigenia: which he ſpecifies (how juſtly, will be conſidered hereafter) as an inſtance of the ἀνωμάλυ, *irregular*, or *ununiform* character, ill-expreſſed, or made *inconſiſtent*. So that the genuine ſenſe of the precept is, "Let the manners be uniform; or, if ununiform, "yet conſiſtently ſo, or uniformly ununiform:" exactly copied, according to the reading, here given, by Horace. Whereas in the other way, it ſtands thus: "Let your characters be uniform, or un-"changed; or, if you paint an ununiform character "(ſuch as Tigellius) let it be ununiform all the way; "*i. e.* ſuch an irregular character to the end of the "play, as it was at the beginning; which is, in "effect, to ſay, let it be *uniform*:" which apparently deſtroys the latter part of the precept, and makes it an unmeaning tautology with the former.

127. AUT SIBI CONSTET.] The ELECTRA and IPHIGENIA of Euripides have been quoted, in the preceding note, as inſtances of *ununiform* characters,

juſtly ſuſtained, or, what Ariſtotle calls, *uniformly ununiform:* And this, though the general opinion condemns the one, and the great critic himſelf, the other; the reader will expect ſome account to be given of this ſingularity.

1. The objection to Electra, is, that her character is drawn with ſuch heightenings of implacability and reſentment, as make it utterly incredible, ſhe ſhould, immediately, on the murder of Clytæmneſtra, fall into the ſame exceſs of grief and regret, as Oreſtes. In confutation of this cenſure I obſerve, 1. That the objection proceeds on a miſtaken preſumption, that the diſtreſs of Electra is equally violent with that of Oreſtes. On the contrary, it is diſcriminated from it by two plain marks. 1. Oreſtes's grief is expreſſed in ſtronger and more emphatic terms—*he accuſes the Gods—he reproaches his ſiſter---he dwells upon every horrid circumſtance, that can inhance the guilt of the murder.* Electra, in the mean time, *confeſſes the ſcene to be mournful---is apprehenſive of bad conſequences---calmly ſubmits to the juſt reproaches of her brother.* 2. He labours, as much as poſſible, to clear himſelf from the imputation of the act. She takes it wholly on herſelf, but, regarding it rather as her fate, than her fault, comforts herſelf in reflecting on the juſtice of it.

πατρὸς δ' ἔτισας φόνον δικαίως. Act v.

This laſt circumſtance puts the wideſt difference between

tween the two caſes. The one ſhews a perfect diſtraction of mind, which cannot even bear the conſciouſneſs of its crimes: the other, a firm and ſteddy ſpirit, ſenſible indeed to its miſery, but not oppreſſed or aſtoniſhed by it.

2. But this meaſure of grief, ſo delicately marked, and, with ſuch truth of character, aſcribed to Electra, ought not, it is further inſiſted, to have ſhewn itſelf, immediately, on the murder of Clytæmneſtra. But why not? There is nothing in the *character of Electra*, *the maxims of thoſe times*, or *in the diſpoſition of the drama itſelf*, to render this change improper or incredible. On the contrary, there is much under each of theſe heads, to lead one to expect it. 1. *Electra's character* is indeed that of a fierce, and determined, but withall of a generous and virtuous woman. Her motives to revenge were, principally, a ſtrong ſenſe of juſtice, and ſuperior affection for a father; not a rooted, unnatural averſion to a mother. She acted, as appears, not from the perturbation of a tumultuous revenge (in that caſe indeed the objection had been of weight) but from a fixed abhorrence of wrong, and a virtuous ſenſe of duty. And what ſhould hinder a perſon of this character from being inſtantly touched with the diſtreſs of ſuch a ſpectacle?

2. *The maxims of thoſe times alſo favour this conduct.* For, 1. The notions of ſtrict remunerative juſtice were then carried very high. This appears from the *Lex talionis*, which, we know, was in great credit

credit in elder Greece; from whence it was afterwards transferred into the Law of the XII Tables. Hence *blood for blood* [αἷμα δ' αἵματος δανεισμὸς,— as the meſſenger, in his account of the death of Ægyſthus, expreſſes it Act iv.] was the command and rule of juſtice. This the Chorus, as well as the parricides, frequently inſiſt upon, as the ground and juſtification of the murder. 2. This ſevere vengeance on enormous offenders was believed, not only conſonant to the rules of *human*, but to be the object, and to make the eſpecial care of the *divine*, juſtice. And thus the ancients conceived of this very caſe. *Juvenal*, ſpeaking of Oreſtes,

Quippe ille DEIS AUCTORIBUS *ultor*
Patris erat cæſi media inter pocula. Sat. viii.

And to this opinion agrees that tradition, or rather fiction, of the poets, who, tho' they repreſent the judges of the Areopagus as divided in their ſentiments of this matter, yet make no ſcruple of bringing in Minerva herſelf to pronounce his abſolution. *Hoc etiam fictis fabulis doctiſſimi homines memoriæ prodiderunt, eum, qui patris ulciſcendi cauſâ matrem necaviſſet, variatis hominum ſententiis non ſolum divinâ, ſed etiam ſapientiſſimæ Deæ ſententiâ abſolutum* [CIC. pro MILON.] The venerable council of Areopagus, when judging by the ſevere rules of *written* juſtice, it ſeems, did not condemn the criminal; and the *unwritten* law of equity, which the fable calls the *wiſdom*

wiſdom of Pallas, formally *acquitted* him. The murder then was not againſt *human*, and directly agreeable to the determinations of *divine*, juſtice. Of this too the Chorus takes care to inform us:

Νέμει τοι δίκαν θεὸς ὅταν τύχῃ. Act iv.

This explains the reaſon of Electra's queſtion to Oreſtes, who had pleaded the impiety of murdering a mother

Καὶ μέν ἀμύνων πατρὶ, δυσεβὴς ἔσῃ;

the force of which lies in this, that a father's death revenged upon the guilty mother, was equally *pious* as juſt. 3. This vengeance was, of courſe, to be executed by the neareſt relations of the deceaſed. This the law preſcribed in judicial proſecutions. Who then ſo fit inſtruments of fate, when that juſtice was precluded to them? This is expreſſed, in anſwer to the plea of Oreſtes, that he ſhould ſuffer the vengeance of the Gods for the murder of his mother; Electra replies,

Τῷ δαὶ πατρῴαν διαμεθῇς τιμωρίαν;

i. e. Who then ſhall repay vengeance to our father? She owns the conſequence, yet inſiſts on the duty of incurring it. There was no other, to whom the right of vengeance properly belonged.

4. Further the pagan doctrine of fate was ſuch, that in order to diſcharge duty in one reſpect, it was unavoidable to incur guilt, in another. This was the

the caſe here, Phœbus commanded and fate had decreed: yet obedience was a crime, to be expiated by future puniſhment. This may ſeem ſtrange to us, who have other notions of theſe matters, but was perfectly according to the pagan ſyſtem. The reſult is, that they knowingly expoſed themſelves to vengeance, in order to fulfil their fate. All that remained was to lament their deſtiny, and revere the awful and myſterious providence of their Gods. And this is, exactly, what Oreſtes pleads, in vindication of himſelf, elſewhere

Ἀλλ' ὡς μὲν οὐκ εὖ, μὴ λεγ', εἴργασαι τάδε,
Ἡμῖν δὲ τοῖς δράσασιν οὐκ εὐδαιμόνως. Oreſt. Act. ii.

5. Laſtly, it ſhould be remembered, how heinous a crime adultery was eſteemed in the old world; when, as well as murder, we find it puniſhed with death. The law of the XII Tables expreſly ſays, ADULTERII CONVICTAM VIR ET COGNATI, UTI VELINT, NECANTO. Now, all theſe conſiderations put together, Electra might aſſiſt at the aſſaſſination of her mother, conſiſtently with the ſtrongeſt feelings of piety and affection. That theſe then ſhould inſtantly break forth, ſo ſoon as the debt to juſtice, to duty, and to fate was paid, is nothing wonderful. And this, by the way, vindicates the Chorus from the inconſiſtency, by ſome charged upon it, in condemning the act, when done, which before they had laboured to juſtify. The common anſwer, "That

"the

"the Chorus follows the character of the people," is inſufficient. For (beſides that the Chorus always ſuſtains a moral character) whence that inconſiſtency in the people themſelves? The reaſon was, the popular creed of thoſe times. It had been an omiſſion of duty to have declined, it was criminal to execute, the murder.

3. The diſpoſition of the drama (whether the moſt judicious, or not, is not the queſtion) was calculated to introduce this change with the greateſt probability. Electra's principal reſentment was to Ægyſthus. From him chiefly proceeded her ill treatment, and from him was apprehended the main danger of the enterprize. Now, Ægyſthus being taken off in the beginning of the preceding act, there was time to indulge all the movements and gratulations of revenge, which the objection ſuppoſes ſhould precede, and for a while ſuſpend the horrors of remorſe, before they come to the murder of Clytæmneſtra. This is rendered the more likely by the long parley, that goes before it; which rather tends to ſoften, than exaſperate, her reſentments, and ſeems artfully contrived to prepare the change, that follows.

On the whole, Electra's concern, as managed by the poet, is agreeable to the tenor of her character, and the circumſtances of her ſituation. To have drawn her otherwiſe, had been perhaps in the taſte of modern tragedy, but had certainly been beſide

beſide the line of nature, and practice of the antients.

11. The caſe of Iphigenia, though a greater authority ſtand in the way, is ſtill eaſier. Ariſtotle's words are, τῷ δὲ ἀνωμάλῳ [παράδειγμα] ἡ ἐν Αὐλίδι Ἰφιγένεια. Οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔοικεν ἡ ἱκετεύσα τῇ ὑστέρᾳ, i. e. "Iphigenia is an inſtance of the inconſiſtent "character: for there is no probable conformity be-"twixt her fears and ſupplications at firſt, and her "firmneſs and reſolution afterwards." But how doth this appear, independently of the name of this great critic? Iphigenia is drawn indeed, at firſt, fearful and ſuppliant: and ſurely with the greateſt obſervance of nature. The account of her deſtination to the altar was ſudden, and without the leaſt preparation; and, as Lucretius well obſerves, in commenting her caſe, NUBENDI TEMPORE IN IPSO; when her thoughts were all employ'd, and, according to the ſimplicity of thoſe times, confeſſed to be ſo, on her promiſed nuptials. The cauſe of ſuch deſtination too, as appeared at firſt, was the private, family intereſt of Menelaus. All this juſtifies, or rather demands the ſtrongeſt expreſſion of female fear and weakneſs. "But ſhe afterwards recants and vo-"luntarily devotes herſelf to the altar." And this, with the ſame ſtrict attention to probability. She had now informed herſelf of the importance of the caſe. Her devotement was the demand of Apollo, and the joint petition of all Greece. The glory of her country,

try, the dignity and intereſt of her family, the life of the generous Achilles, and her own future fame, were, all, nearly concerned in it. All this conſidered, together with the high, heroic ſentiments of thoſe times, and the ſuperior merit, as was believed, of voluntary devotement, Iphigenia's character muſt have been very unfit for the diſtreſs of a whole tragedy to turn upon, if ſhe had not, in the end, diſcovered the readieſt ſubmiſſion to her appointment. But, to ſhew with what wonderful propriety the poet knew to ſuſtain his characters, we find her, after all, and notwithſtanding the heroiſm of the change, in a ſtrong and paſſionate apoſtrophe to her native Mycenæ, confeſſing ſome involuntary apprehenſions and regrets, the remains of that inſtinctive abhorrence of death, which had before ſo ſtrongly poſſeſſed her.

Ἔθρεψας Ἑλλάδι μέγα φάος—
Θανοῦσα δ' οὐκ ἀναίνομαι.

Once the bright ſtar of Greece—
But I ſubmit to die.

This I take to be not only a full vindication of the conſiſtency of Iphigenia's character, but as delicate a ſtroke of nature, as is, perhaps, to be found in any writer.

After the writing of this note, I was pleaſed to find, that ſo ſenſible a critic, as P. Brumoi, had been before me in theſe ſentiments concerning the character of Iphigenia. The reaſons he employs, are nearly

nearly the ſame. Only he confirms them all by ſhewing, that the Iphigenia of Racine, which is modelled, not according to the practice of Euripides, but the Comment of Ariſtotle, is, in all reſpects, ſo much the worſe for it. In juſtice to this ingenious writer, it ſhould be owned, that he is almoſt the only one of his nation, who hath perfectly ſeen through the foppery, or, as ſome affect to eſteem it, the refinement of the French manners. This hath enabled him to give us, in his *Théatre des Grecs*, a maſterly and very uſeful view of the Greek ſtage; ſet forth in all its genuine ſimplicity, and defended on the ſure principles of nature and common ſenſe.

128. DIFFICILE EST PROPRIE COMMUNIA DICERE:] Lambin's Comment is *Communia hoc loco appellat Horatius argumenta fabularum à nullo adhuc tractata: & ita, quæ cuivis expoſita ſunt et in medio quodammodo poſita, quaſi vacua et à nemine occupata.* And that this is the true meaning of *communia* is evidently fixed by the words *ignota indictaque*, which are explanatory of it: ſo that the ſenſe, given it in the commentary, is unqueſtionably the right one. Yet, notwithſtanding the clearneſs of the caſe, a late critic hath this ſtrange paſſage: *Difficile quidem eſſe proprie communia dicere, hoc eſt materiam vulgarem, notam, et è medio petitam ita immutare atque exornare, ut nova et ſcriptori propria videatur, ultro concedimus; et maximi proculdubio ponderis iſta eſt obſervatio. Sed omnibus utrinque collatis et tum difficilis, tum venuſti, tam judicii quam ingenii*

ingenii ratione habita, major videtur eſſe gloria, fabulam formare penitus novam, quam veterem, utcunque mutatam de novo exhibere. [Poet. Præl. v. ii. p. 164.] Where having firſt, put a wrong conſtruction on the word *communia*, he employs it to introduce an impertinent criticiſm. For where does the poet prefer the glory of refitting *old* ſubjects, to that of inventing new ones? The contrary is implied in what he urges about the ſuperior difficulty of the latter; from which he diſſuades his countrymen, only in reſpect of their abilities and inexperience in theſe matters; and in order to cultivate in them, which is the main view of the Epiſtle, a ſpirit of correctneſs, by ſending them to the old ſubjects, treated by the Greek writers.

131. PUBLICA MATERIES PRIVATI JURIS ERIT, &c.] *Publica materies* is juſt the reverſe of what the poet had before ſtiled *communia*; the latter meaning ſuch ſubjects or characters, as, though by their nature left in common to all, had yet, in fact, not been *occupied* by any writer---the former thoſe, which had already been made *public* by *occupation*[a]. In order to acquire a property in ſubjects of this ſort, the poet directs us to obſerve the three following cautions: 1. *Not to follow the trite, obvious round of the original work*, i. e. not ſervilely and ſcrupulouſly to adhere to its plan or method. 2. *Not to be tranſlators, inſtead of imitators*, i. e. if it ſhall be

[a] The reader will perceive, that the ſenſe here given to the words *public* and *common* is taken from the civil law.

thought fit to imitate more expreſly any part of the original, to do it with freedom and ſpirit, and without a ſlaviſh attachment to the mode of expreſſion. 3. *Not to adopt any particular incident, that may occur in the propoſed model, which either decency, or the nature of the work would reject.* M. Dacier illuſtrates theſe rules, which have been conceived to contain no ſmall difficulty, from the Iliad; to which the poet himſelf refers, and probably not without an eye to particular inſtances of the errors, here condemned, in the Latin tragedies. For want of theſe, it may be of uſe to fetch an illuſtration from ſome examples in our own. And we need not look far for them. Almoſt every modern play affords an inſtance of one or other of theſe faults. The ſingle one of Catiline by B. Johnſon is, itſelf, a ſpecimen of them all. This tragedy, which hath otherwiſe great merit, and on which its author appears to have placed no ſmall value, is, in fact, the Catilinarian war of Saluſt, put into poetical dialogue, and ſo offends againſt the *firſt* rule of the poet, *in following too ſervilely the plain beaten round of the Chronicle.* 2. Next, the ſpeeches of Cicero and Catiline, of Cato and Cæſar are, all of them, direct and literal tranſlations of the hiſtorian and orator, in violation of the *ſecond* rule, which forbids *a too cloſe attachment to the mode, or form of expreſſion.* 3. There are ſeveral tranſgreſſions of that rule, which injoins *a ſtrict regard to the nature and genius of the work.* One is obvious and ſtriking. In the hiſtory, which had, for its ſubject, the whole Catilinarian

war, the fates of the conſpirators were diſtinctly to be recorded, and the preceding debates, concerning the manner of their puniſhment, afforded an occaſion, too inviting to be overlooked by an hiſtorian, and above all a republican hiſtorian, of embelliſhing his narration by ſet harrangues. Hence the long ſpeeches of Cæſar and Cato in the ſenate have great propriety, and are juſtly eſteemed amongſt the leading beauties of that work. But the caſe was totally different in the drama; which, taking for its ſubject the ſingle fate of Catiline, had no concern with the other conſpirators, whoſe fates at moſt ſhould only have been hinted at, not debated with all the circumſtance and pomp of rhetoric on the ſtage. Nothing can be more flat and diſguſting, than this calm, impertinent pleading; eſpecially in the very heat and winding up of the plot. But the poet was miſled by the beauty it appeared to have in the original compoſition, without attending to the peculiar laws of the drama, and the *indecorum* it muſt needs have in ſo very different a work.

136. NEC SIC INCIPIES, UT SCRIPTOR CYCLICUS OLIM:] All this [to ℣ 153] is a continuation of the poet's advice, given above,

Rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in actus
Quam ſi proferres ignota indictaque primus.

For, having firſt ſhewn in what reſpects a cloſe obſervance of the epic form would be vicious in tragedy, he now preſcribes how far it may be uſefully

admitted. And this is, 1. [from 136 to 146] in the ſimplicity and modeſty of the exordium; and, 2. [to ℣ 153] in the artificial method and contexture of the piece. 1. The reaſon of the former rule is founded on the impropriety of raiſing a greater expectation, at ſetting out, than can, afterwards be anſwered by the ſequel of the poem. But, becauſe the epic writers themſelves, from whom this conduct was to be drawn, had ſometimes tranſgreſſed this rule, and as the example of ſuch an error would be likely to infect, and, in all probability, actually did infect, the tragic poets of that time, he takes occaſion, 1. to criticize an abſurd inſtance of it; and, 2. to oppoſe to it the wiſer practice of Homer.

2. The like conduct he obſerves under the ſecond article. For, being to recommend to the tragic writer ſuch an artificial diſpoſition of his ſubject, as *haſtens rapidly to the event*, and rejects, as impertinent, all particulars in the round of the ſtory, which would unneceſſarily obſtruct his courſe to it—a plan eſſentially neceſſary to the legitimate epic—he firſt glances at the injudicious violation of this method in a certain poem on *the return of* Diomed, and then illuſtrates and lays open the ſuperior art and beauty of the Iliad. And all this, as appears, for the ſole purpoſe of explaining and inforcing the precept about forming the plots of tragedies from epic poems. Whence we ſee, how properly the examples of the errors, here condemned, are taken, not from the *drama*, as the leſs attentive reader might expect,

but

but ſolely from the epos; for, *this* being made the object of imitation to the dramatic poet, as the tenor of the place ſhews, it became neceſſary to guard againſt the influence of bad models. Which I obſerve for the ſake of thoſe, who, from not apprehending the connection of this and ſuch like paſſages in the epiſtle, haſtily conclude it to be a confuſed medley of precepts concerning the art of poetry, in general; and not a regular well-conducted piece, uniformly tending to lay open the ſtate, and to remedy the defects, of the Roman ſtage.

148. SEMPER AD EVENTUM FESTINAT; &c.] The diſpoſition, here recommended to the poet, might be ſhewn *univerſally* right from the cleareſt principles. But the propriety and beauty of it will, perhaps, be beſt apprehended by ſuch, as are unuſed to the more abſtract criticiſm, from attending to a *particular* inſtance. Let us conceive an objector then to put the following query: "Suppoſing the au-" thor of the Æneis to have related, in the natural " order, the deſtruction of Troy, would not the " ſubject have been, to all intents and purpoſes, as " much *one*, as it is, under its preſent form; in " which that event is told, in the ſecond book, by " way of epiſode?" I anſwer by no means. The reaſon is taken from *the nature of the work*, and from *the ſtate and expectations of the reader*.

1. The *nature of an epic or narrative poem* is this, that it lays the author under an obligation of ſhewing any event, which he formally undertakes in his own perſon, at full length, and with all its material circumſtances. Every figure muſt be drawn in full proportion, and exhibited in ſtrong, glowing colours. Now had the ſubject of the ſecond book of the Æneis been related, in this extent, it muſt not only have taken up one, but many books. By this faithful and animated *drawing*, and the time it would neceſſarily have to *play* upon the imagination, the event had grown into ſuch importance, that the remainder could only have paſſed for a kind of Appendix to it.

2. The ſame concluſion is drawn from conſidering *the ſtate of the reader*. For, hurried away by an inſtinctive impatience, he purſues the *propoſed* event with eagerneſs and rapidity. So circumſtantial a detail, as was ſuppoſed, of an intermediate action not neceſſarily connected with it, breaks the courſe of his expectations, and throws forward the point of view to an immoderate diſtance. In the mean time the action, thus interpoſed and preſented to his thoughts, acquires by degrees, and at length ingroſſes his whole attention. It becomes the important theme of the piece; or, at leaſt, what follows ſets out with the diſadvantage of appearing to him, as a new and diſtinct ſubject.

But

But now being related by way of epiſode, that is, as a ſuccinct, ſummary narration, not made by the poet himſelf, but coming from the mouth of a perſon, neceſſarily ingaged in the progreſs of the action, it ſerves for a ſhort time to interrupt, and, by that interruption to ſharpen, the eager expectation of the reader. It holds the attention, for a while, from the main point of view; yet not long enough to deſtroy that impatient curioſity, which looks forward to it. And thus it contributes to the ſame end, as a piece of miniature, properly introduced into a large picture. It amuſes the eye with ſomething relative to the painter's deſign, yet not ſo, as to with-hold its principal obſervation from falling on the greater ſubject. The parallel will not hold very exactly, becauſe the painter is, of neceſſity, confined to the ſame *inſtant* of time; but it may ſerve for an illuſtration of my meaning. Suppoſe the painter to take, for his ſubject, that part of Æneas's ſtory, where, with his *penates*, his *father*, and his *ſon*, he is preparing to ſet ſail for Italy. To draw *Troy in flames*, as a conſtituent part of this picture, would be manifeſtly abſurd. It would be painting two ſubjects, inſtead of one. And perhaps *Troja incenſa* might ſeize the attention before

Aſcanium Anchiſenque patrem Teucroſque penates.

But a diſtant perſpective of *burning Troy*, might be thrown into a corner of the piece, that is, epiſodi-

cally, with good advantage; where, inſtead of diſtracting the attention, and breaking the unity of the ſubject, it would concenter, as it were, with the great deſign, and have an effect in augmenting the diſtreſs of it.

153. TU, QUID EGO ET POPULUS, &c.] The connection is this. "But though the ſtrict obſervance of theſe rules will enable the poet to conduct his *plot* to the beſt advantage, yet this is not *all* which is required to a *perfect* tragedy. If he would ſeize the attention, and ſecure the applauſe, of the audience, ſomething further muſt be attempted. He muſt (to return to the point, from which I digreſſed, ỳ 127) be particularly ſtudious to expreſs the *manners*. Beſide the peculiarities of *office*, *temper*, *condition*, *country*, &c. before conſidered, all which require to be drawn with the utmoſt fidelity, a ſingular attention muſt be had to the characteriſtic differences of *age*."

Ætatis cujuſque notandi ſunt tibi mores.

The reaſon of this conduct is given in the commentary. It further ſerves to adorn this part of the epiſtle [which is wholly perceptive from ỳ 89 to 202] with thoſe beautiful pourtraitures of human life, in its ſeveral ſucceſſive ſtages, which nature and Ariſtotle had inſtructed him ſo well to paint.

157. Mo-

157. MOBILIBUSQUE DECOR NATURIS DANDUS ET ANNIS.] MOBILIBUS] *non levibus aut inconſtantibus, ſed quæ variatis ætatibus immutantur.* Lambin. NATURIS] By this word is not meant, ſimply, that inſtinctive *natural* biaſs, implanted in every man, to this or that character, but, in general, *nature*, as it appears diverſified in the different periods of life. The ſenſe will be: A certain *decorum* or propriety muſt be obſerved in painting the natures or diſpoſitions of men, varying with their years.

There is then no occaſion for changing the text, with Dr. Bentley, into

Mobilibuſque decor, maturis dandus & annis.

179. AUT AGITUR RES IN SCENIS, AUT ACTA REFERTUR: &c.] The connection is this. The *miſapplication*, juſt now mentioned, deſtroys the *credibility*. This puts the poet in mind of another miſconduct, which hath the ſame effect, viz. *intus digna geri promere in ſcenam.* But, before he makes this obſervation, it was proper to premiſe a *conceſſion* to prevent miſtakes, viz.

Segnius irritant animos, &c.

182. NON TAMEN INTUS DIGNA GERI PROMES IN SCENAM:] I know not a more ſtriking example of the tranſgreſſion of this rule, than in Seneca's Hippolytus; where Theſeus is made to weep over the mangled

mangled members of his ſon, which he attempts to put together on the ſtage. This, which has ſo horrid an appearance in the *action*, might have been ſo contrived, as to have had an infinite beauty in the *narration*; as may be ſeen from a ſimilar inſtance in Xenophon's Cyropædia, where Panthea is repreſented putting together the torn limbs of Abradates.

185. NE PUEROS CORAM POPULO, &c.] Seneca, whom we before [ℌ 123] ſaw ſo ſollicitous to keep up to one rule of Horace, here makes no ſcruple to tranſgreſs another. For, in violation of the very letter of this precept, and of all the laws of decency and common ſenſe, he repreſents Medea butchering her children in the face of the people; and, as if this too faintly painted the fury of her character, he further aggravates the cruelty of the execution, with all the horrors of a lingering act. This, ſeemingly inconſiſtent, conduct of the poet was, in truth, owing to one and the ſame cauſe, namely, "The endeavour to ſuſtain Medea's cha-"racter." For, wanting true taſte to diſcern the exact boundaries, which nature had preſcribed to the human character, or true genius to ſupport him in a due preſervation of it, he, as all bad writers uſe, for fear of doing too little, unfortunately does too much; and ſo, as Shakeſpear well expreſſes it, *o'erſteps the modeſty of nature*, inflating her *ſentiments* with extravagant paſſion, and blackening her *acts* with circumſtances

ſtances of unnatural horror. Though ſome of theſe faults I ſuſpect he only copied. For, to ſay nothing of *that* of Ennius, Ovid's Medea was, at this time, very famous, and as, I think, may be collected from the judgment paſſed upon it by Quinctilian, had ſome of the vices, here charged upon Seneca. *Ovidii Medea*, ſays he, *videtur mihi oſtendere, quantum vir ille præſtare potuerit, ſi ingenio ſuo temperare, quàm indulgere, maluiſſet.* It is not poſſible indeed to to ſay exactly, wherein this *intemperance* conſiſted; but it is not unlikely, that amongſt other things, it might ſhew itſelf in the ſorceries and incantations; a ſubject, intirely ſuited to the wildneſs of Ovid's genius; and which, as appears from his relation of this ſtory in the metamorphoſis, he knew not how treat without running into ſome exceſs and luxuriance in that part. But whether this were the cauſe, or no, the very treating a ſubject, which had gone through ſuch hands, as Euripides, Ennius, and Ovid, was enough to expoſe a writer of better judgment, than Seneca, to ſome hazard. For, in attempting to outdo originals, founded on the plan of ſimple nature, a writer is in the utmoſt danger of running into affectation and bombaſt. And indeed, without this temptation, our writers have generally found means to incur theſe exceſſes; the very beſt of them being too apt to fill their plots with unnatural incidents, and to heighten their characters into caracatures. Though it may be doubted, whether this hath been

been owing ſo much to their own ill taſte, as to a vicious compliance with that of the public; for, as one ſays, who well knew the expediency of this craft, and practiſed accordingly, *to write unnatural things is the moſt probable way of pleaſing them, who underſtand not nature.* [Dryd. Pref. to Mock Aſtrol.]

193. ACTORIS PARTES CHORUS, &c.] See alſo *Ariſtotle* [περ. ποιητ. κ. ιη.] The judgment of two ſuch critics, and the practice of wiſe antiquity concurring to eſtabliſh this precept concerning the Chorus, it ſhould thenceforth, one would think, have become a fundamental rule and maxim of the ſtage. And ſo indeed it has appeared to ſome few writers. The moſt admired of the French tragic poets ventured to introduce it into two of his latter plays, and with ſuch ſucceſs, that, as one obſerves, *It ſhould, in all reaſon, have diſabuſed his countrymen on this head: l'eſſai heureux de M. Racine, qui les* [*chœurs*] *a fait revivre dans* ATHALIE *et dans* ESTHER, *devroit, ce ſemble nous avoir detrompez ſur cet article.* [P. Brumoi, v. i. p. 105.] And, before him, our *Milton*, who, with his other great talents, poſſeſſed a ſupreme knowledge of antiquity, was ſo ſtruck with its uſe and beauty, as to attempt to bring it into our language. His *Sampſon Agoniſtes* was, as might be expected, a maſter-piece. But even his credit hath not been ſufficient to reſtore the Chorus. Hear a late profeſſor of the art declaring, *De choro nihil diſſerui, quia non eſt eſſentialis dramati, atque à neotericis penitus* ET, ME

ME JUDICE, MERITO REPUDIATUR. [Præl. Poet. v. ii. p. 188.] Whence it hath come to paſs, that the chorus hath been thus neglected is not now the inquiry. But that this critic, and all ſuch are greatly out in their judgments, when they preſume to cenſure it in the ancients, muſt appear (if we look no further) from the double uſe, inſiſted on by the poet. For, 1. A *chorus* interpoſing, and bearing a part in the progreſs of the action, gives the repreſentation that *probability*[a], and ſtriking reſemblance of real life, which every man of ſenſe perceives and *feels* the want of upon our ſtage; a want, which nothing but ſuch an expedient, as the chorus, can poſſibly relieve. And, 2. The importance of its other office [℣ 196] to the *utility* of the repreſentation, is ſo great, that, in a moral view, nothing can compenſate for this deficiency. For it is neceſſary to the truth and decorum of characters, that the *manners*, bad as well as good, be drawn in ſtrong, vivid colours, and to that end that immoral ſentiments, forcibly expreſſed and ſpeciouſly maintained, be ſometimes *imputed*. Hence the ſound philoſophy of the chorus will be conſtantly wanting to rectify the wrong concluſions of the audience, and prevent the ill impreſſions, that

[a] *Quel avantage ne peut il* [*le poete*] *pas tirer d'une troupe d'acteurs, qui rempliſſent ſa ſcene, qui rendent plus ſenſible la continuité de l'action, et qui la font paroître plus* VRAISEMBLABLE, *puiſqu'il n'eſt pas naturel qu'elle ſe paſſe ſans temoins. On ne ſent que trop le vuide de notre Théatre ſans chœurs, &c.* [Le Théatre des Grecs, vol. i. p. 105.]

might

might otherways be made upon it. Nor let any one ſay, that the audience is well able to do this for itſelf: Euripides did not find even an Athenian theatre ſo quick-ſighted. The ſtory is well known [Sen. Ep. 115.] that when this faithful painter of the *manners* was obliged, by the rules of his art, and the character to be ſuſtained, to put a run of bold ſentiments in the mouth of one of his perſons, the people inſtantly took fire, charging the poet with the *imputed* villany, as though it had been his *own*. Now, if ſuch an audience could ſo eaſily miſinterpret an attention to the truth of character into the real doctrine of the poet, and this too, when a chorus was at hand to correct and diſabuſe their judgments, what muſt be the caſe, when the *whole* is left to the ſagacity and penetration of the people? The wiſer ſort, 'tis true, have little need of this information. Yet the reflections of ſober ſenſe on the courſe and occurrences of the repreſentation, cloathed in the nobleſt dreſs of poetry, and inforced by the joint powers of *harmony* and *action* (which is the true character of the chorus) might make it, even to ſuch, a no unpleaſing or unprofitable entertainment. But theſe *two* are a ſmall part of the *uſes* of the chorus; which in every light is ſeen ſo important to the truth, decorum, and dignity of the tragic ſcene, that the *modern* ſtage, which hath not thought proper to adopt it, even is, with the advantage of, ſometimes, the juſteſt moral painting and ſublimeſt imagery, but a very faint

faint ſhadow of the *old*; as muſt needs appear to thoſe, who have looked into the antient models, or, diveſting themſelves of modern prejudices, are diſpoſed to conſult the dictates of plain ſenſe. For the uſe of ſuch I once deſigned to have drawn into one view the ſeveral important benefits, ariſing to the drama from the obſervance of this rule, but have the pleaſure to find myſelf prevented by a ſenſible diſſertation of a good French writer, which the reader will find *in the* VIII *Tom. of the hiſtory of the Academy of Inſcriptions and Belles Lettres.*

193. OFFICIUMQUE VIRILE] Heinſius takes *virile* adverbially for *viriliter*. But this is thought harſh. What hinders, but that it may be taken *adjectively?* And then, agreeably to his interpretation, *officium virile* will mean a ſtrenuous, diligent office, ſuch as becomes a perſon intereſted in the progreſs of the action. The precept is levelled againſt the practice of thoſe poets, who, though they allot the part of a *perſona dramatis* to the *chorus*, yet for the moſt part make it ſo idle and inſignificant an one, as is of little conſequence in the repreſentation: by which means the advantage of *probability*, intended to be drawn from this uſe of the *chorus*, is, in great meaſure, forfeited.

194. NEU QUID MEDIOS INTERCINAT ACTUS, QUOD NON PROPOSITO CONDUCAT ET HAEREAT APTE.] How neceſſary this advice might be to the writers

writers of the Auguſtan age cannot certainly appear; but, if the practice of Seneca may afford any ſuſpicion, it ſhould ſeem to have been much wanted; in whom I ſcarcely believe there is one ſingle inſtance of the chorus being employed in a manner, conſonant to its true end and character. To ſupport this general cenſure, which may ſeem to bear hard on the poet, let us examine, in this view, one of the beſt of his plays, I mean, the Hippolytus; whoſe chorus, throughout, bears a very idle and unintereſting part—hath no ſhare in the action—and ſings impertinently.

At the end of the *firſt* act, when Phædra had avowed her paſſion for Hippolytus, inſtead of declaiming againſt her horrid purpoſe, enlarging on the danger and impiety of giving way to unnatural luſts, or ſomething of this nature, which was ſurely the office of the chorus, it expatiates wantonly, and with a poetic luxuriance, on the ſovereign, wide-extended powers of love.

In the cloſe of the *ſecond* act, inſtead of applauding the virtuous obſtinacy of Hippolytus, and execrating the mad attempt of Phædra, it coolly ſings the danger of beauty.

The *third* act contains the falſe accuſation of Hippolytus, and the too eaſy deception of Theſeus. What had the chorus to do here, but to warn againſt a too great credulity, and to commiſerate the caſe of the deluded father? Yet it declaims, in general, on the unequal diſtribution of *good* and *ill*.

After

After the *fourth* act, the chorus ſhould naturally have bewailed the fate of Hippolytus, and reverenced the myſterious conduct of providence in ſuffering the cruel deſtiny of the innocent. This, or ſomething like it, would have been to the purpoſe. But, as if the poet had never heard of this rule of *cohærence*, he harangues, in defiance of common ſenſe, on the inſtability of an high fortune, and the ſecurity of a low.

It will further juſtify this cenſure of *Seneca*, and be ſome amuſement to the critical reader, to obſerve, how the ſeveral blunders, here charged upon him, aroſe from an injudicious imitation of *Euripides*.

I. There are two places in the Greek Hippolytus, which Seneca ſeems to have had in view in his firſt chorus. We will conſider them both.

1. When the unhappy Phædra at length ſuffers the fatal ſecret of her paſſion to be extorted from her, ſhe falls, as was natural, into all the horrors of ſelf-deteſtation, and determines not to ſurvive the confeſſion of ſo black a crime. In this conjuncture, the *nutrix*, who is not drawn, as in modern tragedy, an unmeaning confident, the mere depoſitary of the poet's ſecrets, but has real manners aſſigned to her, endeavours, with the higheſt beauty of character, to divert theſe horrid intentions, and mitigate, in ſome ſort the guilt of her paſſion, by repreſenting to her the reſiſtleſs and all-ſubduing force of love. "Ve-
"nus, ſays this virtuous *monitrix*, is not to be with-

" ſtood, when ſhe ruſhes upon us with all her power.
" Nor is any part of creation vacant from her influ-
" ence. She pervades the air and glides through
" the deeps. We, the inhabitants of the earth, are
" all ſubject to her dominion. Nay, aſk of the ancient
" bards, and they will tell you, that the Gods them-
" ſelves are under her controul." And ſo goes on, enumerating particular examples, from all which ſhe infers at laſt the neceſſity of Phædra's yielding to her fate. Again,

2. Towards the cloſe of the Greek play, when, upon receiving the tragical ſtory of his ſon's ſufferings, Theſeus began to feel his reſentments give way to the workings of parental affection, and, on that account, though he was willing to conceal the true motive, even from himſelf, had given orders for the dying Hippolytus to be brought before him, the chorus very properly flings out into that fine addreſs to Venus,

Σὺ τὰν θεῶν ἀκαμπῆ φρένα, &c.

the ſubſtance of which is, " That Venus, with her
" ſwift-winged boy, who traverſes the earth and
" ocean, ſubdues the ſtubborn hearts of Gods and
" men; inſpiring into all, on whom her influence
" reſts, whether inhabitants of the land or deep, and
" more eſpecially the race of man, a ſoft and ſym-
" pathizing tenderneſs demonſtrating hereby, that
" ſhe alone extends her all-controuling dominion
" over

" over univerſal nature." This ſong, as thus connected with the occaſion, is apparently very proper, and when reduced from the pomp of lyric eloquence to plain proſe, is only an addreſs of congratulation to the powers of love; confeſſing and celebrating their influence, in thus ſoftening the rigors of a father's hate, and awakening in his breaſt the ſoft touches of returning pity and affection.

Now theſe two places, taken together, are plainly the ground-work of that ſong,

Diva, non miti generata ponto, &c.

but how improperly applied, has appeared, in reſpect of the latter of them, from what has been obſerved concerning the *occaſion*; and muſt be acknowledged of the other, from the different *character* of the perſon, to whom it is given; and alſo from hence, that the chorus in the Greek poet expreſsly condemns the impiety of ſuch ſuggeſtions in the nurſe, and admoniſhes Phædra not to lend an ear to them. The chorus, when it comes to ſing in him, is far otherwiſe employed; not in celebrating the triumphs, but deprecating the pernicious fury of this paſſion, and in lamenting the fatal miſcarriages of Hymeneal love.

II. The ſecond ſong on the graces of the prince's perſon, and the danger of beauty, which follows on the abrupt departure of Hippolytus, rejecting, with a virtuous diſdain, the mad attempts of Phædra, and her confidante, is ſo glaringly improper, as not to

admit an excuſe from any example. And yet, I am afraid, the ſingle authority, it has to lean on, is a very ſhort hint, ſlightly dropped by the chorus in the Greek poet on a very different occaſion. It is in the entrance of that ſcene, where the mangled body of Hippolytus is brought upon the ſtage; on the ſight of which the chorus very naturally breaks out,

Καὶ μὲν ὁ τάλας ὅδε δὴ ϛείχει
Σάϱκας νεαϱὰς
Ξανθόν τε κάϱα διαλυμανθείς.

and yet, as the reader of juſt taſte perceives, nothing beyond a ſingle reflexion could have been endured even here.

III. The next ſong of the chorus may, to a common ear ſeem directly copied from Euripides. Yet the two occaſions will be found extremely different. In Seneca Theſeus, under the conviction of his ſon's guilt, inveighs bitterly againſt him, and at laſt ſupplicates the power of Neptune to avenge his crimes. The chorus, as anticipating the effects of this imprecation, arraigns the juſtice of the Gods. In the Greek poet, the father, under the like circumſtances, invokes the ſame avenging power, and, as ſome immediate relief to his rage, pronounces the ſentence of baniſhment, and urges the inſtant execution of it, againſt him. Hippolytus, unable to contend any longer with his father's fury, breaks out into that moſt

moſt tender complaint (than which nothing was ever more affecting in tragedy)

Ἄρηρεν, ὡς ἔοικεν· ὦ τάλας ἐγώ. &c.

containing his laſt adieu to his country, companions, and friends. The chorus touched with the pathos of this apoſtrophe, and commiſerating his ſad reverſe of fortune, enters with him into the ſame excеſs of lamentation, and, as the firſt expreſſion of it, lets fall this natural ſentiment, "That though from coolly "contemplating the divine ſuperintendency of hu-"man affairs, there reſults abundant confidence and "ſecurity againſt the ills of life, yet when we look "abroad into the lives and fortunes of men, that "confidence is apt to fail us, and we find ourſelves "diſcouraged and confounded by the promiſcuous "and undiſtinguiſhing appointments of *good* and *ill*." This is the thought, which Seneca hath imitated, and, as his manner is, outraged in his chorus of the third act.

O magna parens, Natura, Deûm, &c.

But the great difference lies here. That, whereas in *Euripides* this ſentiment is proper and agreeable to the ſtate and circumſtances of the chorus, which is ever attentive to the progreſs of the action, and is moſt affected by what immediately preſents itſelf to obſervation; in *Seneca* it is quite foreign and impertinent, the attention of the chorus naturally turning, not on the diſtreſſes of Hippolytus, which had not yet com-

menced, but on the raſhneſs and unhappy deluſion of Theſeus, as being that, which had made the whole ſubject of the preceding ſcene. But the conſequence of that deluſion, it will be ſaid, was obvious. It may be ſo. But the chorus, as any ſenſible ſpectator, is moſt agitated by ſuch reflections, as occur to the mind from thoſe ſcenes of the drama, which are actually paſſing before it, and not from thoſe which have not yet taken place.

IV. What was remarked of the *ſecond* ſong of the chorus will be applicable to the *fourth*, which is abſurdly founded on a ſingle reflexion in the Greek poet, but juſt touched in a couple of lines, though much more naturally introduced. Theſeus, plunged in the deepeſt affliction by the immature death of Phædra, and not enduring the ſight of the ſuppoſed guilty author of it, commands him into baniſhment, "Leſt, "as he goes on, his former triumphs and ſucceſſes "againſt the diſturbers of mankind, ſhould in con-"ſequence of the impunity of ſuch unprecedented "crimes, henceforth do him no honour." The chorus, ſtruck with the diſtreſsful ſituation of the old king, and recollecting with him the ſum of his former glories, is made to exclaim,

Οὐκ οἶδ', ὅπως εἴποιμ' ἄν εὐτυχεῖν τινα
Θνητῶν· τὰ γὰρ δὴ πρῶτ ἀνέστραπται πάλιν.

i. e. *there is henceforth no ſuch thing, as human happineſs, when the firſt examples of it are thus ſadly reverſed.* Which caſual remark Seneca ſeizes and extends

tends through a whole chorus; where it viſibly ſerves to no other end, but to uſurp a place, deſtined for far more natural and affecting ſentiments.

If I have been rather long upon this head, it is becauſe I conceive this critique on the Hippolytus will let the reader, at once, into the true character of *Seneca*; which he, now ſees, is that of a mere *declamatory moraliſt*. So little deſerving is he of the reputation of a juſt dramatic poet.

196. ILLE BONIS FAVEATQUE, &c.] *The chorus*, ſays the poet, *is to take the ſide of the good and virtuous*, i. e. [ſee note on ℣ 193] is always to ſuſtain a moral character. But this will need ſome explanation and reſtriction. To conceive aright of its office, we muſt ſuppoſe the *chorus* to be a number of perſons, by ſome probable cauſe aſſembled together, as witneſſes and ſpectators of the great action of the drama. Such perſons, as they cannot be wholly unintereſted in what paſſes before them, will very naturally bear ſome ſhare in the repreſentation. This will principally conſiſt in declaring their ſentiments, and indulging their reflections freely on the ſeveral events and diſtreſſes as they ſhall ariſe. Thus we ſee the *moral*, attributed to the chorus, will be no other than the dictates of plain ſenſe; ſuch as muſt be obvious to every thinking obſerver of the action, who is under the influence of no peculiar partialities from *affection* or *intereſt*. Though even theſe may be ſup-

poſed in caſes, where the character, towards which they *draw*, is repreſented as virtuous.

A chorus, thus conſtituted, muſt always, it is evident, take the part of virtue; becauſe this is the natural and almoſt neceſſary determination of mankind, in all ages and nations, when acting freely and unconſtrained. But then it is to be obſerved,

1. That this moral character, or approbation of virtue, muſt alſo be conſiderably influenced by the common and eſtabliſhed notions of *right* and *wrong*; which, though in eſſential points, for the moſt part, uniformly the ſame under all circumſtances, yet will, in ſome particular inſtances, be much diſtorted by the corrupt principles and practices of different countries and times. Hence the *moral* of the ſtage will not be always ſtrictly philoſophical; as reflecting to us the image not of the ſage's ſpeculation, but, of the obvious ſenſe of common, untutored minds. The reader will find this obſervation applied to the caſe of the *chorus* in the Medea, in note on ℣ 200, and it might further, perhaps, be extended to the vindication of ſome others, to which the ignorant temerity of modern criticiſm hath taken occaſion to object. But,

2. The *moral character* of the chorus will not only depend very much on the ſeveral miſtaken notions and uſages, which may happen, under different circumſtances, to corrupt and defile *morality*; but allowance is alſo to be made for the *falſe policies*, which may prevail in different countries; and eſpecially

pecially if they conſtitute any part of the ſubject, which the drama would repreſent. If the *chorus* be made up of free citizens, whether of a republic, or the milder and more equal royalties, they can be under little or no temptation to ſuppreſs or diſguiſe their real ſentiments on the ſeveral events, preſented to their obſervation; but will be at liberty to purſue their natural inclination of ſpeaking the truth. But ſhould this venerable aſſembly, inſtead of ſuſtaining the dignity of free ſubjects, be, in fact, a company of ſlaves, devoted by long uſe to the ſervice and intereſts of a maſter, or awed, by the dread of tyrannical power, into an implicit compliance with his will, the baleful effect, which this very different ſituation muſt have on their moral character, is evident. Their opinions of perſons and things will ceaſe to be oracular; and the interpoſition of the *chorus* will be more likely to injure the cauſe of virtue, than to aſſiſt and promote it. Nor can any objection be made, on this account, to the conduct of the poet; who keeps to nature and probability in drawing the chorus with this imperfectly moral character; and is only anſwerable for his ill choice of a ſubject, in which ſuch a pernicious repreſentation is required. An inſtance will explane my meaning more perfectly. The chorus in the *Antigone*, contrary to the rule of Horace, takes the ſide of the *wicked*. It conſiſts of a number of old Thebans, aſſembled by the order of Creon to aſſiſt, or rather to be preſent, at a kind

of

of a mock council; in which he meant to iſſue his cruel interdict of the rites of ſepulture to the body of Polynices; a matter of the higheſt conſequence in thoſe days, and upon which the whole diſtreſs of the play turns. This veteran troop of vaſſals enter at once into the horrid views of the tyrant, and obſequiouſly go along with him in the projects of his cruelty; calmly, and without the appearance of any virtuous emotion, conſenting to them all. The conſequence is, that the interludes of the chorus are, for the moſt part, impertinent, or ſomething worſe; cautiouſly avoiding ſuch uſeful reflexions, as the nature of the caſe muſt ſuggeſt, or indulging, by their flatteries, the impotent tyranny of their prince. And yet no blame can be fairly charged upon the great poet, who hath ſurely repreſented, in the moſt ſtriking colours, the pernicious character, which a chorus, under ſuch circumſtances, would naturally ſuſtain. The fault muſt therefore fall, where the poet manifeſtly intended to throw it, on the accurſed ſpirit of deſpotiſm; which extinguiſhes, or over-rules the ſuggeſtions of common ſenſe; kills the very ſeeds of virtue, and perverts the moſt ſacred and important offices, ſuch as is that of the chorus, into the means and inſtruments of vice. The glory, which he deſigned, by this repreſentation, to reflect upon the government and policy of his own ſtate, is too glaring to be overlooked. And he hath artfully contrived to counter-act any ill impreſſions on the minds of the people,

people, from the proſtituted authority of the chorus, by charging them in the perſons of Hæmon and Antigone, with their real motives and views. In all indifferent things, in which the paſſions or intereſts of their maſter were not concerned, even this chorus would, of courſe, preſerve a moral character. But we are to look for it no farther. This is the utmoſt verge and boundary of a ſlave's virtue. An important truth, which among many greater and more momentous inſtructions, furniſhes this to the dramatic poet, "That, if he would apply the chorus to "the uſes of a ſound and uſeful moral, he muſt take "his ſubjects, not from the annals of deſpotic ty-"ranny, but from the great events, which occur "in the records of free and equal commonwealths."

200. ILLE TEGAT COMMISSA] This important advice is not always eaſy to be followed. Much indeed will depend on the choice of the ſubject, and the artful conſtitution of the fable. Yet, with all his care, the ableſt writer will ſometimes find himſelf embarraſſed by the chorus. I would here be underſtood to ſpeak chiefly of the moderns. For the antients, though it has not been attended to, had ſome peculiar advantages over us in this reſpect, reſulting from the principles and practices of thoſe times. For, as it hath been obſerved of the antient epic muſe, that ſhe borrowed much of her ſtate and dignity from the falſe *theology* of the pagan world, ſo, I think,

think, may it be juſtly ſaid of the antient tragic, that ſhe has derived great advantages of probability from its miſtaken *moral*. If there be truth in this reflection, it will help to juſtify ſome of the antient choirs, that have been moſt objected to by the moderns. To give an inſtance or two, and leave the curious reader to extend the obſervation at his leiſure.

I. In the Hippolytus of Euripides, the chorus, which is let into Phædra's deſign of killing herſelf, ſuffers this raſh attempt to take effect, rather than divulge the intruſted ſecret. This, to a modern reader ſeems ſtrange; and we are ready to arraign the poet of having allotted a very unfit and unbecoming part to his *chorus*, which, in order to obſerve a *critical*, is thus made to violate a *moral* precept, or at leaſt to ſacrifice the more eſſential part of its character to a punctilio of honour. But the caſe was quite otherwiſe. This ſuicide of Phædra, which on our ſtricter moral plan, is repugnant to the plain rules of duty, was, in the circumſtances ſuppoſed, fully juſtified on the pagan ſyſtem. Phædra had confeſſed the ſecret of her criminal paſſion. By the forward zeal of her confident, her diſgrace is made known to Hippolytus; and thereby, as ſhe conceives, rendered notorious to the public. In this diſtreſs ſhe had only one way to vindicate her honour, and that was at the expence of her life. Rather than bear the inſupportable load of public infamy, ſhe kills herſelf. That this was a juſtifiable cauſe of ſelf-murder in the eye

of the chorus is clear from the reaſon, there aſſigned, of her conduct, manifeſtly in approbation of it. "Phædra, ſays the chorus, oppreſſed and born down "by her afflictions, has recourſe to this expedient of "ſuicide,

τάν τ' εὔδοξον ἀνθαιρεμένα
Φάμαν, ἀπαλλάσσεσθαί
Τ' ἀλγεινὸν φρενῶν ἔρωτα.

"for the ſake of her good fame, and in order to free "herſelf from the tortures of a cruel paſſion." And how agreeable this was to the pagan ſyſtem, in general, let the reader collect from the following teſtimonies in Cicero: *Si omnia fugiendæ turpitudinis adipiſcendæque honeſtatis cauſâ faciemus, non modo ſtimulos doloris, ſed etiam fulmina fortunæ contemnamus licebit: præſertim cum paratum ſit illud ex heſternâ diſputatione perfugium. Ut enim, ſi cui naviganti prædones inſequantur, Deus quis dixerit, Ejice te navi; præſto eſt, qui excipiat,* &c. *omnem omittas timorem; ſic urgentibus aſperis et odioſis doloribus, ſi tanti non ſit, ut ferendi ſint, quo ſit confugiendum vides.* [Tuſc. Diſp. L. ii. 26.] And, again, in the cloſe of the V^th^ diſputation, *Mihi quidem in vita ſervanda videtur illa lex, quæ in Græcorum conviviis obtinet: Aut bibat, inquit, aut abeat. Et rectè. Aut enim fruatur aliquis pariter cum aliis voluptate potandi; aut, ne ſobrius in violentiam vinolentorum incidat, ante diſcedat:*

ſi

ſi INJURIAS FORTUNÆ, QUAS FERRE NEQUEAS, DEFUGIENDO RELINQUAS.

II. Another example may, I think, be fetched from the *Medea*. Scarcely any thing has been more the ſubject of modern cenſure, than the part, which the chorus is made to act in this tragedy. *Whence comes it*, ſays M. Dacier, *that the chorus, which conſiſts of Corinthian women, is faithful to a ſtranger againſt their ſovereign*[a]? This good Frenchman, it ſeems,

[a] See alſo to the ſame purpoſe P. Corneille's *Exam. ſur la Medée*. If the objection, made by theſe critics, to the part of the chorus, be, *the improbability*, as was explained at large in the preceding note, *of a ſlave's taking the ſide of virtue againſt the pleaſure of his tyrant*, the manifeſt difference of the two caſes will ſhew it to be without the leaſt foundation. For 1. the chorus in the Medea conſiſts of women, whom compaſſion and a ſecret jealouſy and indignation at ſo flagrant an inſtance of the violated faith of marriage, attach, by the moſt natural connexion of intereſts, to the cauſe and perſon of the injured queen. In the Antigone, it is compoſed of old courtiers, devoted, by an habitude of ſlavery, to the will of a maſter, aſſembled, by his expreſs appointment, as creatures of his tyranny, and, prompted, by no ſtrong movements of ſelf-love, to take part againſt him. 2. In the Antigone, the part of Creon is *principal*. Every ſtep, in the progreſs of the play, depends ſo immediately upon him, that he is almoſt conſtantly upon the ſtage. No reflections could therefore be made by the chorus, nor any part againſt him be undertaken, but directly in his preſence, and at their own manifeſt hazard. The very reverſe of this is the caſe in the Medea. Creon is there but a ſubaltern perſon—has a very ſmall part aſſigned him in the conduct of the play—is, in fact, introduced upon the ſtage

ſeems, thought it a kind of treaſon, even on the ſtage, and where a moral character was to be ſuſtained, to take part againſt a tyrant. But he will further ſay, that the moral character of the chorus was forfeited in thus concealing, and, in effect, abetting the impious cruelties of Medea. *The laws of nature and of God were tranſgreſſed in rendering this ſervice to her.* All which is very true, ſuppoſing the reader to judge of this matter by the purer chriſtian moral. But how will he prove this to be the caſe on the received notions and practices of paganiſm? It appears, this critic did not apprehend, what a moderate attention to ancient hiſtory and manners might have taught him, that the violation of conjugal fidelity was a crime of that high nature, as to deſerve in the public opinion, and excuſe, the ſevereſt vengeance of retaliation. This the laws expreſly allowed to the injuries of the huſband. And, it is probable, the wife might incline to think the reaſon of the caſe extended alſo to her. What is certain is, that we find ſome of the deepeſt ſcenes of horror, which antient hiſtory furniſhes, or antient fiction could paint, wrought

ſtage but in one ſingle ſcene. The different ſituation of the chorus, reſulting from hence, gives occaſion for the wideſt difference in their conduct. They may ſpeak their reſentments freely. No inſtant terrors counteract their natural feelings. Unawed by the frowns and menaces of their tyrant, they are left at liberty to follow the ſuggeſtions of virtue. Nothing here offends againſt the law of probability, or, in the leaſt, contradicts the reaſoning about the chorus in the Antigone.

up from the occaſion of this neglect of conjugal faith. And it is well obſerved by one, in ſpeaking of the difference between the antient and modern ſtage, that what is now held the fit ſubject of comic mirth and ridicule in chriſtian theatres, was never employed but to ſtir up the utmoſt horror and commiſeration, on the heathen. "We do not find, ſays this agree-"able writer, any comedy in ſo polite an author, as "Terence, raiſed upon the violations of the marriage-"bed. The falſhood of the wife or huſband has "given occaſion to noble tragedies; but a Scipio "and Lælius would have looked upon inceſt or mur-"der, to have been as proper ſubjects for comedy." This is ſtrictly and preciſely the truth. And, therefore, as the crimes of inceſt or murder were believed deſerving the higheſt puniſhment by the Pagans, and every good man was ready to intereſt himſelf in ſeeing it inflicted[a]; ſo, in the caſe of the open violation of the marriage-compact, the fierceſt acts of revenge were juſtified in the public opinion, and paſs'd only for acts of ſtrict juſtice. And for this, if we wanted further authority, we have the expreſs word of the chorus. The Corinthian women do not barely conſent to ſecrecy, in virtue of an extorted oath or promiſe (tho' more might have been ſaid for this, than every reader is aware of) but in conſequence of their entire and full approbation of her intentions. For thus, in anſwer to Medea's petition to them, with-

[a] See *n.* on ℣ 127.

out

out the leaſt reſerve or heſitation, they are made to reply,

Δράσω τάδ'· ἐνδίκως γὰρ ἐκτίσῃ πόσιν
Μήδεια.

I will do it; for this revenge on a huſband is juſt. We ſee then the chorus, in keeping the ſecret of Medea's murders, was employed in its great office of countenancing and ſupporting *ſalubrem juſtitiam, wholeſome juſtice.* And, therefore, the ſcholiaſt, with M. Dacier's leave, gave a fit and proper account of the matter (ſo far was it from being *impious* and *ridiculous)* in ſaying, *that the Corinthian women being free,* i. e. not devoted to the ſervice of Creon, by the ſpecial duties of any perſonal attachment, *take the ſide of juſtice, as the chorus is wont to do on other occaſions.* The circumſtance of their *freedom* is properly mentioned. For this diſtinguiſhes their caſe from that of the *nutrix,* who upon receiving the account of Jaſon's cruelties, cries out,

Ὤλοιτο μὲν μὴ, δεσπότης γάρ ἐς' ἐμὸς,
Ἀτὰρ κακός γ' ὢν εἰς φίλους ἁλίσκεται.

And that the chorus enter'd into Medea's deſigns againſt her huſband, the tyrant Creon, and her rival, on reaſons of juſtice and equity only, and not (as is haſtily believed by ſome, who have not enough attended to the decorum of the antient tragedy) for the ſake of forwarding the poet's plot, may be certainly ſhewn. For when, in the fury of her reſentments,

and as the full completion of her revenge, the mother comes to propoſe the murder of her innocent children, the chorus ſtarts with horror at the thought, diſſuades her from it in the moſt earneſt and affecting manner[a], and ſeems to have concealed the dreadful ſecret only from the perſuaſion, that it was too horrid and unnatural to be perpetrated. The reader will collect this with pleaſure, by turning to the fine ſong, which follows. It may be further obſerved, that Medea herſelf, in opening this laſt purpoſe of her rage to the chorus, exacts fidelity of them only, *as they wiſh'd well to an injur'd queen, and were women*;

Εἴπερ φρονεῖς εὖ δεσπόταις, γυνή τ' ἔφυς.

which is beautifully contrived by the poet, to diſcriminate the two caſes, and to intimate to us, that reaſons of juſtice were now no longer to be pleaded.

In ſum, though theſe acts of ſevere avenging juſtice might not be according to the expreſs letter of the laws, or the more refined concluſions of the PORCH or ACADEMY; yet there is no doubt, that they were, in the general account, eſteemed fit and reaſonable. And,

[a] *For her own ſake,* as is pleaded, *and in obedience to the laws,*

Σέ τ' ὠφελεῖν θέλουσα, καὶ νόμους βροτῶν
Ξυλλαμβάνουσα, δρᾶν σ' ἀπεινέπω τάδε. ℣ 812.

which ſhews, that the other murders were not againſt the ſpirit of the laws, whatever became of the letter of them.

it

it is to be obſerved, in order to paſs a right judgment on the antient chorus, that, though in virtue of their office, they were obliged univerſally to ſuſtain a moral character; yet this moral was rather political and popular, than ſtrictly legal or philoſophic. Which is alſo founded on good reaſon. The ſcope and end of the antient theatre being to ſerve the intereſts of virtue and ſociety, on the principles and ſentiments, already ſpread and admitted amongſt the people, and not to correct old errors, and inſtruct them in philoſophic truth.

202. TIBIA NON UT NUNC ORICHALCO, &c.] [from ℣ 202 to ℣ 220.] This is one of thoſe many paſſages in the epiſtle, about which the critics have ſaid a great deal, without explaining any thing. In ſupport of what I mean to offer, as the true interpretation, I obſerve,

I. That the poet's intention certainly was, not to cenſure the *falſe* refinements of their ſtage-muſic; but, in a ſhort digreſſive hiſtory (ſuch as the didactic form will ſometimes require) to deſcribe the riſe and progreſs of the *true*. This I collect, 1. From *the expreſſion itſelf*; which cannot, without violence, be underſtood in any other way. For, as to the words *licentia* and *præceps*, which have occaſioned much of the difficulty, the *firſt* means a *freer uſe*, not a *licentiouſneſs*, properly ſo called; and the *other* only expreſſes a vehemence and rapidity of language, naturally productive of a quicker elocution, ſuch as muſt of courſe attend the more numerous harmony

of the lyre:—not, as M. Dacier tranſlates it, *une eloquence temeraire et outrée*, an extravagant ſtraining and affectation of ſtyle. 2. From *the reaſon of the thing*; which makes it incredible, that the muſic of the theatre ſhould then be moſt complete, when the times were barbarous, and entertainments of this kind little encouraged or underſtood. 3. From *the character of that muſic itſelf*; for the rudeneſs of which, Horace, in effect, apologizes in defending it only on the ſcore of the imperfect ſtate of the ſtage, and the ſimplicity of its judges. This then being clear, I obſerve:

II. That thoſe two verſes

[*Indoctus quid enim ſaperet liberque laborum,*
Ruſticus urbano confuſus, turpis honeſto?]

are, as they now ſtand, utterly inexplicable. This hath appeared long ſince, from the fruitleſs labours of the critics, and, above all, of Lambin, one of the beſt of them; who, after ſeveral repeated efforts to elucidate this place, leaves it juſt as dark and unintelligible as he found it. *Horum verborum*, ſays that learned Commentator, *hanc ſententiam eſſe puto: Neque vero mirum eſt, hanc licentiam et luxuriem, quæ ab antiquorum ſeveritate tam longè abeſſet, et ab arte comica tantopere diſcreparet, fuiſſe a populo probatam ac receptam. Quæ enim ſapientia eſſet in ruſticis et indoctis et labore ſolutis et turpibus hominibus cum populo urbano confuſis? Alii ſic: Neque vero mirum eſt hanc numerorum et modorum licentiam a ruſticis eſſe probatam,*

probatam, aut vero toleratam; quid enim ſaperet ruſticus, ab opere ſolutus, &c. id eſt, quid enim proficeret, ſi plus ſapere videri vellet, quam urbanus et honeſtus? vel quid ſaperet, id eſt, quantum ſaperet? quaſi dicat, ut inſipientes ejicerentur ruſtici, ſi urbanorum luxuriem ac licentiam improbarent et condemnarent? vel quid, i. e. propter quid, ſeu quamobrem ſapere vellet? &c. That is, the learned critic *would* explain it if he *could*. But a little attention might have ſhewn him the deſign was impracticable. For, taking the poet's intention to be, as hath been explained, the lines have apparently no ſenſe: and, on their interpretation, who make it, not an encomium on the *true*, but a cenſure of the *falſe* refinements of the *Tibia*, in reality, as little. For, 1. Was this an effect to be attributed to a mixture of Ruſtics and Citizens? An affected delicacy in muſic is the genuine reſult of affected and delicate manners; not of a vicious compliance with the rude taſte of the people. 2. This degenerate taſte, as proceeding from the intermixture of the ruſtic rabble, can leaſt of all be underſtood of the Roman theatre, which always abounded in this ſort; and the more ſo, the further we look back, till, in the earlier times, it conſiſted of little elſe. The *veſtigia ruris* were, we know, imprinted long before the wide extent of the Roman conqueſts. Yes, but ſays the critic, [Lambin loc. cit.] *Quid ſaperet*, i. e. *who could expect a reform of the licentious taſte of the citizen and the better ſort—urbani & honeſti, from the*

deſpiſed ruſtic? To which can only be replied, that, if any did indeed expect a reform from that quarter, they may perhaps take this for an anſwer. I conclude, on the reaſons here given, that the lines in queſtion are either *ſpurious*; or, if that is not allowed, are certainly *miſplaced*. What other *poſition* may better ſuit them, will be conſidered. [See *n.* on ℣ 225.] The interpretation, without them, ſtands thus. "The Tibia, ſays the poet, was at firſt *low* "and *ſimple*. The *firſt*, as beſt agreeing to the "then *ſtate of the ſtage*, which required only a ſoft "muſic to go along with, and aſſiſt the chorus; "there being no large and crowded theatres to *fill* "in thoſe days. And the *latter*, as ſuiting beſt to "the then *ſtate of the times*; whoſe ſimplicity and "frugal manners exacted the ſevereſt temperance, as "in every thing elſe, ſo, in their dramatic ornaments "and decorations. But, when conqueſt had enlarged "the territory, and widen'd the walls of Rome; "and, in conſequence thereof, a ſocial ſpirit had "diſpelled that ſeverity of manners, by the intro-"duction of frequent feſtival ſolemnities; then, as "was natural to expect, a freer and more varied har-"mony took place. And thus it was, that the *Ti-"bicen*, the muſician, who played to the declamation "in the acts, inſtead of the rude and ſimpler ſtrain "of the old times, gave a richneſs and variety of tone; "and, inſtead of the old inactive poſture, added the "grace of motion to his art. Juſt in the ſame man-"ner, continues he, it happened to the *Lyre*, i. e.

"*the*

" *the muſic in the chorus*, which originally, as that of " the *Tibia*, was ſevere and ſimple; but, by degrees, " acquired a quicker and more expreſſive modulation, " ſuch as correſponded to the more elevated and " paſſionate turn of the poet's ſtyle, and the diviner " enthuſiaſm of his ſentiment." All that is further wanting to ſupport and juſtify this interpretation, will be found in the notes on particular paſſages.

203. TENUIS SIMPLEXQUE &c.] It may here be obſerved of the manner, in which the poet hath choſen to deliver this whole part [from ℣ 202 to 295] that, beſides its other uſes, it tends directly to convey to his readers, and impreſs upon them in the ſtrongeſt manner, the principal inſtruction, he has in view, and with which the epiſtle more expreſsly concludes, *viz. The uſes and importance of a ſpirit of critical application.* For, in ſpeaking of the *ſtage muſic*, of the *ſatyrs*, and the *Greek tragedy* (all which come naturally in his way, and are very artfully connected) he chuſes to deduce the account of each from its ruder and leſs poliſhed original; tracing it through its ſeveral ſucceſſive ſtages, and marking out to us the gradual poliſh and refinement, which it acquired from increaſing diligence and correctneſs. The *Tibia* at firſt was *ſimple* and *rude*—The *ſatyrs naked* and *barbarous*, and the *Greek tragedy itſelf deformed and ſhapeleſs* in the cart of Theſpis. Care and attention reform'd each. It follows,

Nil intentatum noſtri liquere poetæ, &c.

i. e. our poets have not been wanting in their attempts to excel in theſe ſeveral particulars. What is neceſſary to their ſucceſs is, *limæ labor et mora.* If the reader bears this in mind, it will help him to ſee the order and ſcope of this part more diſtinctly.

204. ASPIRARE ET ADESSE CHORIS &c.] *Chorus* here means the whole dramatic performance, which was originally nothing elſe.

206. UTPOTE PARVUS, ET FRUGI CASTUSQUE VERECUNDUSQUE &c.] M. *Dacier* finds here *four* cauſes *of the little regard the antients had for plays* [he ſhould have ſaid, of their being ſatisfied with the *Tibia*, all rude and ſimple as is here deſcribed] *la premiere, que le peuple Romain étoit encore alors en petit nombre: la ſeconde, qu'il étoit ſage: la troiſiéme, qu'il étoit chaſte, c'eſt à dire pieux: & la quatriéme, qu'il étoit modeſte.* All which, except the firſt, in which he could not miſtake, are palpable blunders. For the three laſt epithets are in truth ſynonymous, all of them expreſſing what, though he took three gueſſes for it, he had the ill fortune to miſs at laſt, *that plainneſs and ſimplicity* of character, *that frugal reſerve and moderation in the uſe of any thing*, which ſo eſſentially belongs to rude minds, uninſtructed in the arts of life. His *four* cauſes are, in fact, then but two; which have been fully conſidered in note on *v.* 202.

211. Ac-

211. ACCESSIT NUMERISQUE MODISQUE LICENTIA MAJOR.] M. *Dacier* is *out* again, when he takes *licentia major* in a bad ſenſe, as implying *laſciveté, a culpable and licentious refinement.* The *licence*, here ſpoken of, with regard to *numbers* and *ſounds*, like that in another place, which reſpects *words* [l. 51] is one of thoſe, which is allowed, when *ſumpta pudenter.* The comparative *major*, which is a *palliative*, ſhews this; and is further juſtified by a like paſſage in *Cicero De Oratore* [l. iii. c. 48.] where ſpeaking of this very licence in poetry, he obſerves, that out of the Heroic and Iambic meaſure, which were at firſt ſtrictly obſerved, there aroſe by degrees the Anapæſt, *procerior quidam numerus, & ille licentior & divitior Dithyrambus*; evidently not condemning this change, but oppoſing it to the rigorous and confined meaſure of the elder poets. But the expreſſion itſelf occurs in the piece entitled *Orator*, in which, comparing the freedoms of the poetical and oratorial ſtyle, *in ea* [i. e. *poetica*] ſays he, *licentiam ſtatuo majorem eſſe, quam in nobis faciendorum jungendorumque verborum.* The poet ſays, this *licence* extended *numeris modiſque*, the former of which words will expreſs that *licence of metre*, ſpoken of by *Cicero*, and which is further explained ỳ 256, *&c.* where an account is given of the improvement of the Iambic verſe.

214. SIC

214. SIC PRISCÆ, — — — ARTI
TIBICEN, *&c.*
SIC FIDIBUS ETIAM, *&c.*

This is the application of what hath been ſaid, in general, concerning the refinement of theatrical muſic to the caſe of *tragedy*. Some commentators ſay, and to *comedy*. But in this they miſtake, as will appear preſently. M. *Dacier* hath, I know not what conceit about a compariſon betwixt the *Roman* and *Greek* ſtage. His reaſon is, *that the lyre was uſed in the Greek chorus, as appears*, he ſays, *from Sophocles playing upon this inſtrument himſelf in one of his tragedies.* And was it not uſed too in the Roman chorus, as appears from Nero's playing upon it in ſeveral tragedies? But the learned critic did not apprehend this matter. Indeed from the caution, with which his guides, the dealers in antiquities, always touch this point, it ſhould ſeem, that they too had no very clear conceptions of it. The caſe I take to have been this: The *Tibia*, as being moſt proper to accompany the declamation of the acts, *cantanti ſuccinere*, was conſtantly employed, as well in the Roman tragedy as comedy. This appears from many authorities. I mention only two from Cicero. *Quam multa* [Acad. l. ii. 7.] *quæ nos fugiunt in cantu, exaudiunt in eo genere exercitati: Qui, primo inflatu Tibicinis, Antiopam eſſe aiunt aut Andromacham, cum nos ne ſuſpicemur quidem.* The other is ſtill more expreſs.

expreſs. In his piece, entitled *Orator*, ſpeaking of the negligence of the Roman writers, in reſpect of *numbers*, he obſerves, *that there were even many paſſages in their tragedies, which, unleſs the* TIBIA *played to them, could not be diſtinguiſhed from mere proſe: quæ, niſi cum Tibicen acceſſerit, orationi ſint ſolutæ ſimillima.* One of theſe paſſages is expreſsly quoted from *Thyeſtes*, a tragedy of *Ennius*; and, as appears from the meaſure, taken out of one of the acts. It is clear then, that the *Tibia* was certainly uſed in the *declamation* of tragedy. But now the ſong of the tragic chorus, being of the nature of the ode, of courſe required *Fides*, the lyre, the peculiar and appropriated inſtrument of the lyric Muſe. And this is clearly collected, if not from expreſs teſtimonies; yet from ſome occaſional hints dropt by the antients. For, 1. the lyre, we are told, [Cic De Leg. ii. 9 & 15] and is agreed on all hands, was an inſtrument of the Roman theatre; but it was not employed in comedy. This we certainly know from the ſhort accounts of the muſic prefixed to Terence's plays. 2. Further, the *Tibicen*, as we ſaw, accompanied the declamation of the acts in tragedy. It remains then, that the proper place of the lyre was, where one ſhould naturally look for it, in the ſongs of the chorus; but we need not go further than this very paſſage for a proof. It is unqueſtionable, that the poet is here ſpeaking of the chorus only; the following lines not admitting any other poſſible interpretation. By *Fidibus* then is neceſſarily underſtood.

ſtood the inſtrument peculiarly uſed in it[a]. In this view, the whole digreſſion is more pertinent and connects better. The poet had before been ſpeaking of tragedy. All his directions, from l. 100. reſpect this ſpecies of the drama only. The application of what he had ſaid concerning muſic, is then moſt naturally made, 1. to the *Tibia*, the muſic of the acts; and, 2. to *Fides*, that of the choir: thus confining himſelf, as the tenor of this part required, to tragedy only. Hence is ſeen the miſtake, not only of M. Dacier, whoſe comment is in every view inſupportable; but, as was hinted, of Heinſius, Lambin, and others, who, with more probability, explained this of the Roman comedy and tragedy. For though *Tibia* might be allowed to ſtand for comedy, as oppoſed to *Tragœdia*, [as in fact, we find it in 11. Ep. 1. 98.] that being the only inſtrument employed in it; yet in ſpeaking expreſsly of the muſic of the ſtage, *Fides* could not determinately enough, and in contradiſtinction to *Tibia*, denote that of tragedy, it being an inſtrument uſed ſolely, or principally in the chorus; of which, the context ſhews, he alone ſpeaks. It is further to be obſerved, that in the application here made, beſides the muſic, the poet takes in the other improvements of the tragic chorus,

[a] Not that I contend that the *Tibia* was never uſed in the chorus. The contrary ſeems expreſſed in a paſſage of Seneca, [Ep. lxxxiv.] and in Julius Pollux [L. iv. 15. § 107.] 'Tis ſufficient, if the *lyre* was uſed ſolely, or principally at this time in it.

theſe

theſe happening, as from the nature of the thing they muſt, at the ſame time.

214. SIC PRISCAE MOTUMQUE ET LUXURIEM] Theſe two words are employed to expreſs that *quicker movement*, and *richer modulation* of the new muſic; the peculiar defects of the *old* being, 1. That it moved too ſlowly, and 2. That it had no compaſs or variety of notes. It was that *movement*, that velocity and vehemence of the muſic, which Roſcius required to have ſlackened in his old age.

215. TRAXITQUE VAGUS PER PULPITA VESTEM.] This expreſſes not only the improvement ariſing from the ornament of proper dreſſes, but from the grace of motion: not only the *actor*, whoſe peculiar office it was, but the *minſtrel* himſelf, as appears from hence, conforming his geſture in ſome ſort to the muſic [a].

216. SIC

[a] Of the uſe and propriety of theſe geſtures, or dances, it will not be eaſy for us, who ſee no ſuch things attempted on the modern ſtage, to form any very clear or exact notions. What we cannot doubt of is, 1. That the ſeveral theatrical dances of the antients were ſtrictly conformable to the genius of the different ſpecies of compoſition, to which they were applied. 2. That, therefore, the tragic dance, which more eſpecially accompanied the chorus, muſt have been expreſſive of the higheſt gravity and decorum, tending to inſpire ideas of what is *becoming*, *graceful*, and *majeſtic*; in which view we cannot but perceive the important aſſiſtance, it muſt needs lend to virtue, and

216. SIC FIDIBUS ETIAM VOCES &c.] He is here ſpeaking of the great improvement in the tragic chorus, after the Roman conqueſts, when the Latin writers began to enquire

Quid Sophocles & Theſpis & Æſchylus utile ferrent.

This improvement conſiſted, 1. In a more inſtructive moral ſentiment: 2. In a more ſublime and animated expreſſion; which of courſe produced, 3. A greater vehemence in the declamation: to which conformed, 4. A more numerous and rapid muſic. All theſe particulars are here expreſſed, but, as the reaſon of the thing required, in an inverted order. The muſic of the lyre (that being his ſubject and introducing the reſt) being placed firſt, the declamation, as attending that, next; the language, *facundia*, that is the ſubject of the declamation, next; and the ſentiment, *ſententia*, the ground and baſis of the language laſt.

how greatly it muſt contribute to ſet all her graces and attractions in the faireſt light. 3. This idea of the antient tragic dance, is not ſolely formed upon our knowledge of the conformity, before mentioned; but is further collected from the name, uſually given to it, which was Εμμέλεια. This word cannot well be tranſlated into our language; but expreſſes all that grace and concinnity of motion, which the dignity of the choral ſong required. 4. Laſtly, it muſt give us a very high notion of the moral effect of this dance, when we find the ſevere Plato admitting it into his commonwealth.

Et

Et tulit eloquium inſolitum facundia præceps.

literally, "A vehemence and rapidity of language "produced an unuſual vehemence and rapidity of elo- "cution in the declaimer[a]!" *Unaccuſtom'd* is indifferently a *cenſure* or *encomium*, according as the preceding ſtate of the thing ſpoken of was *wrong*, or *right*. Much the ſame may be obſerved of *præceps*; its *literal* ſenſe is a degree of *motion* in any thing above what it had before. This may be *exceſſive*, or otherwiſe, as it chances: When apply'd to *the bleak Eaſt wind, diſperſing a flight of bees, and daſhing them in the ſtream,*

ſi forte morantes
Sparſerit aut præceps Neptuno immerſerit Eurus.
Virg. Georg. iv. 29.

the epithet implies *exceſs*; but when ſpoken of the *gentle South, whoſe ſtrongeſt gale is but ſufficient to drive the willing ſhip to port*, [Æn. vii. 410.] *Præcipiti delata Noto*, it then only expreſſes *due meaſure*.

As for the criticiſm from Quintilian, who oppoſes *præcipitia* to *ſublimibus*, it is doubly impertinent: 1. As the ſenſe is neceſſarily fix'd by its oppoſition to *ſublimibus*: and 2. As the word is here uſed, not as

[a] This "rapidity of language" is exactly the ſame, as that Cicero ſpeaks of in Democritus and Plato, [Orat. 638. Eb.] which, becauſe of its quick and rapid movement, *quod incitatius teratur*, ſome critics thought to be poetical.

implying

implying *motion*, but *height*, in which view its ſenſe is *abſolute*, and always denotes *exceſs*.

218. UTILIUMQUE SAGAX RERUM, ET DIVINA FUTURI, SORTILEGIS NON DISCREPUIT SENTENTIA DELPHIS.] It is amazing that theſe two lines ſhould ever have been miſunderſtood, as a cenſure, the import of them being highly *encomiaſtic*, yet with great exactneſs declaring the ſpecific boaſt and excellence of the Chorus; which lay, as Heinſius hath well obſerv'd, 1. In inculcating important moral leſſons; and 2. In delivering uſeful preſages and monitions concerning future conduct, with an almoſt oracular prudence and authority.

SIC PRISCAE — — — ARTI.
What hath chiefly miſled the Critics in their explanation of this place, I ſuſpect to have been the frequent encomiums on the ſeverity of the antient muſic, by the Greek and Latin writers. Tho' here they ſeem to have overlook'd two very material conſiderations: 1. That the *former* have chiefly treated the ſubject in a *moral* or *political* view, and therefore preferred the ancient muſic only as it was conceived to influence the public manners. For this reaſon Plato, one of the chief of thoſe *encomiaſts*, applauds, as we find, the practice of Ægypt, in ſuffering no change of her poetry, but continuing, to his time, her fondneſs for the *Songs of Iſis* [De Leg. l. ii. ſub. init.] which juſt as much infers the perfection of thoſe ſongs, conſidered in a critical

critical view, as Rome's ſticking to her *Saliar verſes* would have ſhewn thoſe poor, obſcure oriſons to have exceeded the regular odes and artificial compoſitions of Horace. 2. That the *latter*, the principal of them at leaſt, who talk in the ſame ſtrain, lived under the Emperors; in whoſe time, indeed, muſic had undergone a miſerable proſtitution, *being broken*, as one of the beſt of thoſe writers complains, *into an effeminate and impure delicacy—In ſcenis effeminata et impudicis modis fracta*, [Quint. 1. L. x.] As to the times in queſtion, I know but of one paſſage, which clearly and expreſly condemns the muſic then in vogue; and that will admit of ſome alleviation from its being found in a treatiſe concerning laws. The paſſage I mean is in Cicero, [De Leg. 2. L. xvi.] who, following Plato in his high-flown principles of legiſlation, exclames, *Illa quæ ſolebant quondam compleri ſeveritate jucunda Livianis & Nævianis modis; nunc ut eadem exultent, cervices oculoſque pariter cum* MODORUM FLEXIONIBUS *torqueant!* For the *ſeveritas jucunda* of the muſic, to which Livius's plays were ſet, it may be tolerably gueſſed from hence, that he was the *firſt* who brought a written Play upon the ſtage; *i. e.* the firſt writer, whoſe plays were acted to a regular and precompoſed muſic. And it is not, we know, very uſual for the firſt eſſays in any art to be perfect. It ſhould ſeem then, that the *flexiones modorum*, as oppoſed to the plainneſs of the old muſic, are here condemned, not ſo much in

the view of a critic, eſtimating the true ſtate of the ſtage; but, as was hinted of a legiſlator, treading in the ſteps of Plato. Though indeed I have no doubt, that the muſic in thoſe times was much changed, and had even ſuffered ſome degree of corruption. This I infer, not ſo much from any expreſs authorities that have occurred, as from the general ſtate of thoſe times, which were degenerating apace into the worſt morals, the ſure forerunners of a corrupt and vitiated muſic; for, though it may indeed, in its turn, and doubtleſs does, when eſtabliſhed, contribute much to help on the public depravity, yet that depravity itſelf is originally not the *effect*, but the *cauſe* of a bad muſic; as is more than hinted to be Cicero's real opinion in the place referred to, where, obſerving that the manners of many Greek ſtates had kept pace with their muſic, he adds, that they had undergone this change, *Aut hac dulcedine corruptelaque depravati, ut quidam putant; aut cum ſeveritas eorum ob alia vitia cecidiſſet, tum fuit in auribus animiſque mutatis etiam huic mutationi locus.* [Leg. xi. 15.] But be this as it will, Horace, as we have ſeen, is no way concerned in the diſpute about the antient muſic.

219. SENTENTIA DELPHIS.] *Sententia* is properly *an aphoriſm taken from life, briefly repreſenting either what is, or what ought to be the conduct of it: Oratio ſumpta de vita, quæ aut quid ſit aut quid eſſe oporteat in vita, breviter oſtendit.* [Ad Herenn. Rhet. L. iv.] Theſe aphoriſms are here mentioned, as conſtituting

ing the peculiar praiſe and beauty of the chorus. This is finely obſerved, and was intended to convey an oblique cenſure on the practice of thoſe poets, who ſtuff out every part of the drama alike with moral ſentences, not conſidering, that the only proper receptacle of them is the chorus, where indeed they have an extreme propriety; it being the peculiar office and character of the chorus to moralize. In the courſe of the action they ſhould rarely be uſed; and that for the plain reaſon aſſigned by the author, juſt quoted, [for the rule holds on the ſtage, as well as at the bar] *Ut rei actores, non vivendi præceptores eſſe videamur*. That there was ſome ground for this reproof of the Roman drama, is collected from the few remaining fragments of the old Latin plays, which have much of this ſententious caſt, and from what Quintilian expreſly tells us of the old Latin poets, whoſe fame, it ſeems, was principally raiſed upon this merit. *Tragœdiæ ſcriptores, Accius et Pacuvius, clariſſimi gravitate ſententiarum, &c.* [L. x. c. 1.] To how intolerable an extreme this humour of moralizing in plays was afterwards carried, Seneca has given us an example.

But here a queſtion will be ſtarted, "Why then "did the Greeks moralize ſo much, or, if we con- "demn *Accius* and *Seneca*, how ſhall we defend *So*- "*phocles* and *Euripides*?" An ingenious [a] modern

[a] P. Brumoy, Diſc. ſur le parall. des Theat. p. 165. Amſt. 1732.

hath taken ſome pains to ſatisfy this difficulty, and in part, I think, hath ſucceeded. His ſolution, in brief, is, "That the moral and political aphoriſms of the "Greek ſtage generally contained ſome apt and in-"tereſting alluſion to the ſtate of public affairs, "which was eaſily catched by a quick, intelligent "auditory; and not a dry, affected moral, with-"out further meaning, as for the moſt part was that "of the Latins." This account is not a little confirmed by particular inſtances of ſuch acknowledged alluſions, as well as from reflections on the genius and government of the Athenians, at large. But this, though it goes ſome way, does not fully extricate the matter. The truth is, theſe ſentences are too thick ſown in the Greek writers, to be fully accounted for from the ſingle conſideration of their democratical views. Not to obſerve, that the very choice of this *medium* for the conveyance of their political applications, pre-ſuppoſes the prior acknowledged uſe and authority of it. I would then account for it in the following manner.

I. In the virtuous ſimplicity of leſs poliſhed times, this ſpirit of moralizing is very prevalent; the good ſenſe of ſuch people always delighting to ſhew itſelf in ſententious or proverbial γνῶμαι, or obſervations. Their character, like that of the clown in Shakeſpear, is *to be very ſwift and ſententious.* [As you like it, Act v. ſc. 1.] This is obvious to common experience, and was long ſince obſerved by the *philoſopher*,

loſopher, οἱ ἀγροικοι μάλιϛα γνωμοτύποι εἰσὶ, καὶ ῥᾳδίως ἀποφαίνονται, [Ariſt. Rhet. l. ii. c. 21.] an obſervation, which of itſelf accounts for the practice of the elder poets in Greece, as in all other nations. A cuſtom, thus introduced, is not eaſily laid aſide, eſpecially when the oracular caſt of theſe ſentences, ſo fitted to *ſtrike*, and the moral views of writers themſelves (which was more particularly true of the old dramatiſts) concurred to favour this taſte. But, 2. there was added to this, more eſpecially in the age of Sophocles and Euripides, a general prevailing fondneſs for moral wiſdom, which ſeems to have made the faſhionable ſtudy of men of all ranks in thoſe days; when ſchools of philoſophy were reſorted to for recreation as well as inſtruction, and a knowledge in morals were the ſupreme accompliſhment in vogue: The fruit of theſe philoſophical conferences would naturally ſhew itſelf in certain brief, ſententious concluſions, which would neither contradict the faſhion, nor, it ſeems, offend againſt the eaſe and gaiety of converſation in thoſe times. *Schools* and *pedantry*, *morals* and *auſterity*, were not ſo eſſentially connected, in their combinations of ideas, as they have been ſince; and a ſenſible moral truth might have fallen from any mouth, without diſgracing it. Nay, which is very remarkable, the very *ſcholia*, as they were called, or drinking catches of the Greeks, were ſeaſoned with this moral turn, the ſallies of pleaſantry, which eſcaped them in their freeſt hours, being tempered for

the moſt part, by ſome ſtrokes of this national ſobriety. "During the courſe of their entertainments, "ſays Athenæus, [L. xv. c. 14.] they loved to hear, "from ſome wiſe and prudent perſon, an agreeable "ſong: and thoſe ſongs were held by them moſt agreeable, which contained exhortations to virtue, or other "inſtructions relative to their conduct in life." And this moralizing humour, ſo prevalent in thoſe times, is, I dare be confident, the true ſource of the ſententious caſt of the Greek dramatic writers, as well as of that ſober air of moral, which, to the no ſmall diſplicency of modern readers, is ſpread over all their poets. Not but there would be ſome difference in thoſe poets themſelves, and in proportion, as they had been more or leſs converſant in the Academy, would be their reliſh of this moral mode; as is clearly ſeen in the caſe of Euripides, that philoſopher of the ſtage, as the Athenians called him, and who is characterized by Quinctilian, as *ſententiis denſus, et in iis, quæ a ſapientibus tradita ſunt, pæne ipſis par.* [L. x. c. 1.] Yet ſtill the faſhion was ſo general, that no commerce of the world could avoid, or wholly get clear of it; and therefore Sophocles, though his engagements in the ſtate kept him at a greater diſtance from the ſchools, had yet his ſhare of this philoſophical humour. Now this apology for the practice of the Greek poets doth by no means extend to the Roman; Philoſophy having been very late [a], and

[a] Cicero ſays, *Philoſophia quidem tantum abeſt ut proinde, ac de hominum eſt vitâ merita, laudetur, ut a pleriſque neg-*

never

never generally the taſte of Rome. And, though in the age of Seneca, *Sentences*, we know, were much in uſe; yet the caſt and turn of them evidently ſhew them to have been the affectation of the lettered *few*, and not the *general* mode and practice of the time. For the quaintneſs, in which Seneca's aphoriſms are dreſſed, manifeſtly ſpeaks the labour and artifice of the cloſet, and is juſt the reverſe of that eaſy, ſimple expreſſion, which cloaths them in the Greek poets, thus demonſtrating their familiar currency in common life. Under any other circumſtances than theſe, the practice, as was obſerved, muſt be unqueſtionably faulty; except only in the chorus, where, for the reaſon before given, it may always, with good advantage, be employed.

220. CARMINE QUI TRAGICO, &c.] The connection with ℣ 201, from whence the poet had digreſſed, is worth obſerving. The digreſſion had been taken up in deſcribing the improved ſtate of dramatic muſic; the application of which to the caſe of tragedy, brings him round again to his ſubject, the tragic chorus; to which alone, as hath been obſerved, the two laſt lines refer. This too is the fineſt preparation of what follows. For to have paſſed on di-

lecta, a multis etiam vituperetur. In another place he tells us, that in his time Ariſtotle was not much known, or read even by the philoſophers themſelves. [*Cic. Top. ſub init.*]

rectly from the *tibia* to the *ſatyrs*, had been abrupt and inartificial; but from *tragedy*, the tranſition is eaſy, the *ſatyrs* being a ſpecies of the tragic drama. That it was ſo accounted may be ſeen from the following paſſage in Ovid,

Eſt et in obſcœnos deflexa tragœdia riſus,
Multaque præteriti verba pudoris habet.
Triſt. L. ii. ℣ 409.

For the *tragedy*, here referred to, cannot be the regular Roman tragedy. *That* he had diſtinctly conſidered before, and, beſides, it in no age admitted, much leſs in this, of which we are ſpeaking, ſo abſurd and intolerable a mixture. As little can it be underſtood of the proper Atellane fable, for beſides that Ovid is here conſidering the *Greek* drama only, the Atellane was ever regarded as a ſpecies, not of tragedy, but comedy: The authority of Donatus is very expreſs; "*Comœdiarum* formæ ſunt tres: Pal-" liatæ, Togatæ, *Atellanæ*, ſalibus et jocis compo-" ſitæ, quæ in ſe non habent niſi vetuſtam ele-" gantiam." [Prol. in Terent.] And Athenæus [L. vi.] ſpeaking of ſome pieces of this ſort, which L. Sylla had compoſed, calls them σατυρικὰς κωμῳδίας, ſatyric comedies; *comedies*, becauſe, as Donatus ſays, "ſalibus et jocis compoſitæ:" and *ſatyric*, not that ſatyrs were introduced in them, but according to Diomedes, from their being "argumentis dictiſque "*ſimiles* ſatyricis fabulis Græcis." Of what then can Ovid be underſtood to ſpeak, but the true ſatyric

tyric piece, which was always eſteemed, and, as appears from the Cyclops, in fact is, what Demetrius [περὶ ἑρμηνείας] elegantly calls it, τραγῳδία παιζόσῃ, a lighter kind of *tragedy*; the very name, which Horace, as well as Ovid in this place, gives to it? But this is further clear from the inſtance quoted by Ovid, of this looſe tragedy; for he proceeds:

Nec nocet autori, mollem qui fecit Achillem,
Infregiſſe ſuis fortia facta modis.

which well agrees to the idea of a ſatyric piece, and, as Voſſius takes notice, ſeems to be the very ſame ſubject, which Athenæus and others tell us, Sophocles had work'd into a ſatyric tragedy, under the title of Ἀχιλλέως ἐρασταί.

221. MOX ETIAM, &c.] It is not the intention of theſe notes to retail the accounts of others. I muſt therefore refer the reader, for whatever concerns the hiſtory of the ſatyric, as I have hitherto done, of the tragic, and comic drama, to the numerous diſſertators on the antient ſtage; and above all in the caſe before us, to the learned Caſaubon; from whom all that hath been ſaid to any purpoſe, by modern writers, hath been taken. Only it will be proper to obſerve one or two particulars, which have been greatly miſunderſtood, and without which it will be impoſſible, in any tolerable manner, to explain what follows.

I. The

I. The deſign of the poet, in theſe lines, is not to fix the origin of the ſatyric piece, in aſcribing the invention of it to Theſpis. This hath been concluded, without the leaſt warrant from his own words, which barely tell us, "that the Repreſentation of tragedy was "in elder Greece, followed by the *ſatyrs*;" and indeed the nature of the thing, as well as the teſtimony of all antiquity, ſhew it to be impoſſible. For the *ſatyr* here ſpoken of, is, in all reſpects, a regular drama, and therefore could not be of earlier date, than the times of Æſchylus, when the conſtitution of the drama was firſt formed. 'Tis true indeed, there was a kind of entertainment, of much greater antiquity, which by the antients is ſometimes called *ſatyric*, out of which (as Ariſtotle aſſures us) tragedy itſelf aroſe ἡ δὲ τραγῳδία, διὰ τὸ ἐκ σατυρικῆ μεταβαλεῖν, ὀψὲ ἀπεσεμνώθη, [περ. ποιητ. κ. δ.] But then this was nothing but a chorus of ſatyrs [Athenæus, l. xiv.] celebrating the feſtivals of *Bacchus*, with rude ſongs, and uncouth dances; and had little reſemblance to that, which was afterwards called *ſatyric*; which, except that it retained the chorus of ſatyrs, and turned upon ſome ſubject, relative to Bacchus, was of a quite different ſtructure, and, in every reſpect, as regular a compoſition, as tragedy itſelf.

There is no doubt but the poem, here diſtinguiſhed by the name of SATIRI, was in actual uſe on the Roman ſtage. This appears from the turn of the poet's whole critique upon it. Particularly, his addreſs to the Piſos, ℣ 235. and his obſervation of the offence

offence a looſe dialogue in this drama would give to a *Roman* auditory, v. 248. make it evident that he had, in fact, the practice of his own ſtage in view. It hath, however, been queſtioned, whether by *Satyri* we are to underſtand the proper Greek *Satyrs*, or the Latin *Atellane* fable, which, in the main of its characters, very much reſembled that drama. If the authority of Diomedes be any thing, the *former* muſt be the truth, for he expreſly aſſerts, "that "the pieces, though Satyric and Atellane ſimilar in "the general caſt of their compoſition, differed in "this eſſential point, that the perſons in the former "were ſatyrs, in the other, not." [L. iii.c. De poem. gen.] Now the poet expreſsly tells us the Perſons in the drama he is here deſcribing, were *Satyrs*, and accordingly delivers rules for the regulation of their characters. As to the *Atellane*, according to the way, in which Voſſius reads the words of Diomedes, the characters were Tuſcan, and *perſonæ Oſcæ*, which is very probable, not ſo much for the reaſons aſſign'd by this Critic (for they are indeed very frivolous) but becauſe, as it ſhould ſeem from a paſſage in Strabo, [Lib. v. 233.] the Tuſcan language was uſed in theſe Atellanes, and therefore common ſenſe would require, that the perſons alſo introduced ſhould be Tuſcan. The difficulty is to know how it happened that, in a work written purpoſely to reform the Roman ſtage, the poet ſhould ſay nothing of one ſpecies, the *Atellane*, which was of great authority and conſtant uſe at Rome, and yet ſay ſo much of another, the *Satyrs*, which

which was properly a Greek entertainment and certainly much leſs cultivated by the Roman poets. The plain ſolution of the matter, is, that, when now the Romans were become acquainted with the Greek models, and had applied themſelves to to the imitation of them, theſe Tuſcan characters were exchanged for the Greek ſatyrs, which they before reſembled in the main parts of their character; and which appear, on other occaſions, to have been no ſtrangers at Rome; as we collect from the Sileni and Satyrs, making a part (as Dionyſius relates it) in their triumphal proceſſions. So that this change of the *Tuſcan* perſons for *Satyrs* is to be conſidered only as an improvement of the old *Atellane*, and not the introduction of an intirely new drama. In every other reſpect the precepts here given for the regulation of the *Satyrs* are ſuch as would equally ſerve to improve the *Atellane*. The probable reaſon why the poet choſe to inſiſt ſo much on this alteration, or rather why he laboured ſo ſtrenuouſly to *ſupport* it, will be given in its place. In the mean time ſuppoſing his view to have been this of countenancing the introduction of *ſatyric perſons* into the Atellane (and that they were, in fact, introduced, we learn from an expreſs authority[a]) every thing ſaid on the ſubject will not only be pertinent and agreable to what is here taught to be the general tenor of the epiſtle, but will

[a] *Agite, fugite, quatite, Satyri:* A verſe cited from one of theſe Latin ſatyrs by Marius Victorinus.

be

be ſeen to have addreſs and contrivance, which will very much illuſtrate this whole part, and recommend it to the exact reader.

III. For the abſolute merit of theſe ſatyrs, the reader will judge of it himſelf by comparing the Cyclops, the only piece of this kind remaining to us from antiquity, with the rules here delivered by Horace. Only it may be obſerved, in addition to what the reader will find elſewhere [*n.* ỳ 224.] apologized in its favour, that the double character of the ſatyrs admirably fitted it, as well for a ſenſible entertainment to the wiſe, as for the ſport and diverſion of the vulgar. For while the groteſque appearance, and jeſting vein of theſe fantaſtic perſonages amuſed the one; the other ſaw much further; and conſidered them, at the ſame time, as replete with ſcience, and informed by a ſpirit of the moſt abſtruſe and profound wiſdom. Hence important leſſons of civil prudence, intereſting alluſions to public affairs, or a high, refined moral, might, with the higheſt probability, be inſinuated, under the ſlight cover of a ruſtic ſimplicity. And from this inſtructive caſt, which from its nature, muſt be very obſcure, if not impenetrable, to us at this day, was, I doubt not, derived the principal pleaſure which the antients found in this ſpecies of the drama. If the modern reader would conceive any thing of the nature and degree of this pleaſure, he may in part gueſs at it, from reflecting on the entertaiment he himſelf receives from the characters of the clowns in Shakeſpeare; *who*, as the poet himſelf hath

hath characterized them, *uſe their folly, like a ſtalking horſe, and under the preſentation of that, ſhoot their wit.* [As you like it.]

221. AGRESTES SATYROS, &c.] It hath been ſhewn, that the poet could not intend, in theſe lines, to *fix the origin of the ſatyric drama.* But, though this be certain, and the diſpute concerning that point be thereby determined, yet is it to be noted, that he purpoſely deſcribes the ſatyr in its ruder and leſs poliſhed form; glancing even at ſome barbarities, which deform the Bacchic chorus; which was properly the ſatyric piece, before Æſchylus had, by his regular conſtitution of the drama, introduced it, under a very different form on the ſtage. The reaſon of this conduct is given in *n.* on ŷ 203. Hence the propriety of the word *nudavit*; which Lambin rightly interprets, *Nudos introduxit Satyros*, the poet hereby expreſſing the monſtrous indecorum of this entertainment in its firſt unimproved ſtate. Alluding alſo to this ancient character of the *Satyr*, he calls him *aſper*, i. e. rude and petulant; and even adds, that his jeſts were intemperate, and without the *leaſt mixture of gravity.* For thus, upon the authority of a very learned critic, I explane *incolumi gravitate*, i. e. rejecting every thing ſerious, bidding *farewell*, as we ſay, *to all gravity.* Thus [L. iii. O. 5.]

Incolumi Jove & urbe Roma:

i. e.

i. e. bidding farewell to Jupiter [Capitolinus] and Rome; agreeably to what is ſaid juſt before,

Anciliorum & nominis & togæ
OBLITUS, *æternæque Veſtæ.*

Or, as SALVUS is uſed ſtill more remarkably in Martial [10. L. 5.]

Ennius eſt lectus SALVO *tibi, Roma, Marone:*
Et ſua riſerunt ſecula Mæonidem.

Farewell all gravity, is as remote from the original ſenſe of the words *fare well*, as *incolumi gravitate* from that of *incolumis*, or *ſalvo Marone* from that of *ſalvus*.

224. POTUS ET EXLEX. The lines

Indoctus quid enim ſaperet liberque laborum
Ruſticus urbano confuſus, turpis honeſto?

were, I obſerved, certainly miſplaced. They ſhould, I think, come in here, where their ſenſe is extremely pertinent. The poet had been ſpeaking of the ſatyric drama, which ſays he, was added to the tragic,

eo quod
Inlecebris erat, & grata novitate morandus
Spectator, functuſque ſacris, & potus, et exlex.

But why, it might be aſked, this compliance, in ſo falſe a taſte, with a drunken, lawleſs rabble? The anſwer is natural, and to the purpoſe. "Becauſe "their theatres neceſſarily conſiſted of a mixed aſſem-"bly,

" bly, every part of which was to be conſidered in " the public diverſions." The queſtion then hath an extreme propriety:

Indoctus quid enim ſaperet liberque laborum,
Ruſticus urbano confuſus, turpis honeſto?

The *ruſticus* and *turpis* demanded the ſatyric piece. It was the neceſſary reſult of this mixture; as to gratify the better ſort, the *urbanus* and *honeſtus*, the tragic drama was exhibited. It is ſome prejudice in favour of this conjecture, that it explanes to us, what would otherwiſe appear very ſtrange, that ſuch groſs ribaldry, as we know the Atellanes conſiſted of, could ever be endured by the politeſt age of Rome. But ſcenical repreſentations being then intended, not as in our days, for the entertainment of the better ſort, but on certain great ſolemnities, indifferently for the diverſion of the whole city, it became neceſſary to conſult the taſte of the multitude, as well as of thoſe, *quibus eſt equus et pater et res*[a].

And

[a] If any one, after all, ſhould think the tranſpoſition here contended for, too violent, the only tolerable interpretation of two verſes, as they now ſtand, is, perhaps, the following. It is poſſible, the progreſs of the poet's thoughts may have been this: 1. Simplicity and ruſticity. 2. Ruſticity and licentiouſneſs, *i. e.* ſuch an alteration, as would naturally ariſe from ſome corruption of manners, and a great increaſe of people; but without the addition of any conſiderable degree of art, or refinement. 3. In proceſs of time, this ſame licentious muſic, refined and adorned with all the graces of art. N. B. The muſic in its ſecond ſtage, though ſtill ruſtic, and in bad taſte, muſt yet be

And this may ſerve to vindicate the poet from the cenſure of a late critic[b], who has fallen upon this part of the epiſtle with no mercy. "The poet, ſays "he, ſpends a great number of verſes about theſe "ſatyrs; but the ſubject itſelf is unworthy his pen. "He, who could not bear the elegant mimes of La- "berius, that he ſhould think this farcical and ob- "ſcene traſh, worth his peculiar notice, is ſomewhat "ſtrange." I doubt not, it appeared ſo to this writer, who neither conſidered the peculiar neceſſity of the ſatyric piece, nor attended to the poet's purpoſe and drift in this epiſtle. The former is the more extraordinary, becauſe he hath told us, and rightly too, "that to content the people, the ſatyric "was ſuperadded to the tragic drama." And he quotes a paſſage from Diomedes, which gives the ſame account, *Satyros induxerunt ludendi cauſa jocandique, ſimul ut ſpectator inter res tragicas ſeriaſque ſatyrorum quoque jocis & ludis delectaretur.* Should not this have taught him, that what was ſo requiſite to content the people, might deſerve ſome notice from the poet? This *farcical traſh* was chiefly calculated for thoſe, who without the *enticement of ſo agreeable a change* in the entertainment of the day, would not

be ſuppoſed to have been *approaching* ſomewhat towards perfection. *Sic priſcæ*, &c. i. e. And thus, by degrees, from one improvement to another, the *Tibicen* at laſt attained that delicacy of muſic, and thoſe additional graces of motion and dreſs, which we ſee in the preſent age. *Sic*, i. e. till at length.

[b] *Obſervat. on Shakeſpear*, p. 112.

have had patience to ſit out the tragedy; which being intended for the gratification of the better ſort, *urbani & honeſti*, they, in their turn, required to be diverted in the only way, which was to the level of their taſte, that of farce and pleaſantry. And this I dare be confident, ſo great a patron of liberty, as this writer, will agree with me in thinking to be but reaſonable in a free ſtate; which ought to make ſome proviſion for the *few*, that may chance, even under ſuch advantages, to want a truly critical ſpirit. I hold then, that Horace acted, not only in the character of a good critic, but of a prudent man, and good citizen, in attempting to refine, what it had not been equitable, or was not in his power, wholly to remove. But 2. the learned critic as little attended to the drift of the epiſtle, as to the important uſe and neceſſity of the ſatyric drama. He muſt otherwiſe have ſeen, that, in an eſſay to improve and regulate the Roman theatre (which is the ſole purpoſe of it) the poet's buſineſs was to take it, as it then ſtood, and to confine himſelf to ſuch defects and abuſes, as he found moſt likely to admit a correction, and not, as viſionary projectors uſe, to propoſe a thorough reform of the public taſte in every inſtance. The *Atellanes* had actual poſſeſſion of the ſtage, and from their antiquity, and other prejudices in their favour, as well as from the very deſign and end of their theatrical entertainments, would be ſure to keep it. What had the poet then, in theſe circumſtances, to do, but, in purſuance of his main deſign, to encourage a reformation

formation of that entertainment, which he was not at liberty abſolutely, and under every ſhape, to reject. This he judged might moſt conveniently be done by adopting the Greek *Satyrs* inſtead of their own *Tuſcan* characters. With this change, though the Atellanes might not, perhaps, be altogether to his own taſte, yet he hoped to render it a tolerable entertainment to the better ſort. And this, in fact, it might have been by following the directions here given; part of which were intended to free it from that *obſcene and farcical traſh*, which appears to have been no leſs offenſive to the poet, than to this critic.

As for the ſo much applauded *mimes*, they had not, it is probable, at this time gained a footing on the ſtage, ſufficient to entitle them to ſo much conſideration. This was a new upſtart ſpecies of the drama, which, though it had the common good-fortune of abſurd novelties, to take with the great; yet was generally diſapproved by men of better taſte, and better morals. Cicero had paſſed a ſevere cenſure upon it in one of his epiſtles, [Ad famil. ix. 16.] which intimates, that it was of a more buffoon and ridiculous compoſition, than their Atellanes; whoſe place it began to be the faſhion to ſupply with this ribaldry. And we collect the ſame thing from what Ovid obſerves of it in apology for the looſeneſs of his own verſes,

Quid ſi ſcripſiſſem MIMOS *obſcœna jocantes,*
Qui ſemper vetiti crimen amoris habent?

\- - - - - - - -

Nec ſatis inceſtis temerari vocibus aures,
Aſſueſcunt oculi *multa pudenda pati.*

Triſt. l. ii. ℣497.

Horace, with this writer's leave, might therefore judge it better to retain the Atellanes under ſome reſtrictions, than adopt what was much worſe. But the mimes of Laberius were quite another thing. They were all elegance. So J. Scaliger [Comment. de Comœd. and Tragœd. c. vi.] and, after him, this writer, tells us; but on no better grounds, than that he wrote good Latin (though not always that, as may be ſeen in A. Gellius, L. xvi. c. 7.) and hath left a few elegant, moral ſcraps behind him. But what then? the kind of compoſition was ridiculous and abſurd, and, in every view, far leſs tolerable, than the *ſatyrs* under the regulation of Horace. The latter was a regular drama, conſiſting of an intire fable, conducted according to the rules of probability and good ſenſe, only daſhed with an extravagance of mirth and pleaſantry for the ſake of the mob. The character of the former hath been given above from unqueſtionable authorities. Accordingly Diomedes [iii. p. 488. ed. Putſch.] defines it to be *an irreverent and laſcivious imitation of obſcene acts—mimus eſt ſermonis cujuſlibet motus ſine reverentia, vel factorum & turpium cum laſcivia imitatio.* And Scaliger himſelf

himſelf owns *veri mimi proprium eſſe quædam ſordida ut affectet*, loc. cit. It ſeems, in ſhort, to have been a confuſed medley of comic drollery on a variety of ſubjects, without any conſiſtent order or deſign; delivered by one actor, and heightened with all the licence of obſcene geſticulation. Its beſt character, as practiſed by its greateſt maſter, Laberius, was that of being witty in a very bad way [Sen. Controv. l. iii. c. 18.] and its ſole end and boaſt, *riſu diducere rectum* [Hor. i. S. x. 7.] which, whatever virtue it may be, is not always a proof of much elegance. But I have ſpent too many words on a criticiſm, which the ingenious author, I am perſuaded, let fall unawares, and did not mean to give us as the reſult of a mature and well-weighed deliberation on this ſubject.

225. VERUM ITA RISORES &c.] The connecting particle, *verum*, expreſſes the oppoſition intended between the original ſatyr and that which the poet approves. For having inſinuated the propriety of the ſatyric ſhews, as well from the practice of Greece, as the nature of feſtival ſolemnities, the poet goes on to animadvert on ſuch defects, and to preſcribe ſuch rules, in the conduct of them, as might render them a tolerable diverſion, even to the better ſort. This introduction of the ſubject hath no ſmall art. For, there being at this time (as hath been ſhewn) an attempt to bring in the Greek ſatyrs, while the Atellane plays (as was likely) ſtill held the affections of the people, the poet was not openly to reproach

and diſcredit theſe; but, by a tacit preference, to ſupport and juſtify the other. This is done with addreſs. For, inſtead of criticiſing the Atellanes, which came directly in his way, after having cloſed his account of the Roman tragedy, he relates, as it were, incidentally the practice of antient Greece exhibiting ſatyrs, and thence immediately paſſes on, without ſo much as touching on the other favourite entertainment, to offer ſome directions concerning the ſatyric drama.

227. NE QUICUNQUE DEUS, QUICUNQUE ADHIBEBITUR HEROS &c.] Gods and Heroes introduced as well into the ſatyric as tragic drama, and often the very ſame Gods and Heroes, which had born a part in the preceding tragedy: a practice, which Horace, I ſuppoſe, intended, by this hint, to recommend as moſt regular. This gave the ſerious, tragic air to the ſatyr. The comic, aroſe from the *riſor* and *dicax*, who was either a ſatyr himſelf, or ſome character of an extravagant, ridiculous caſt, like a ſatyr. Of this kind, ſays Diomedes, from whom I take this account, are Antolychus and Burris: which laſt particular I mention for the ſake of juſtifying a correction of the learned Caſaubon. This great critic conjectured, that, inſtead of *Burris*, in this place, it ſhould be read *Buſiris*. His reaſon is "*nam Burris iſte ex Græcorum poetis mihi non eſt notus:*" which reaſon hath more force, than appears at firſt ſight. For the very nature of this diverſion required, that the principal character

character of it ſhould be well known, which it was ſcarce likely to be, if not taken from a common ſtory in their poets. But Voſſius objects, "*ſed non* "*ea fuerit perſona ridicula:*" contrary to what the grammarian repreſents it. But how ſo? Buſiris was a ſavage, inhoſpitable tyrant, who ſacrificed ſtrangers. And what ſhould hinder this character from being made ridiculous, as well as Polypheme in the Cyclops? Their characters were not unlike. And as is ſeen in that caſe, the antients knew to ſet forth ſuch monſters of cruelty in a light, that rendered them equally abſurd and deteſtable. This was agreeable to their humanity, which, by ſuch repreſentations, loved to cultivate a ſpirit of benevolence in the ſpectators; and ſhews the moral tendency of even the abſurdeſt of the antient dramatic ſhews. The objection of Voſſius is then of no weight. But what further confirms the emendation of the excellent Caſaubon, is a manuſcript note on the margin of a printed copy of this book, which I have now by me, as it ſhould ſeem, from his own hand, "*lectionem vero quam* "*reſtituimus etiam in optimo codice Puteano poſtea in-*"*venimus.*" The learned reader will therefore, henceforth, look upon the text of *Diomedes*, in this place, as fully ſettled.

229. MIGRET IN OBSCURAS &c.
AUT, DUM VITAT &c.

The two faults, cautioned againſt, are 1. a too low,

or vulgar expreſſion, in the comic parts; and 2. a too ſublime one, in the tragic. The *former* of theſe faults would almoſt naturally adhere to the firſt eſſays of the Roman ſatyrs, from the buffoon genius of the old Atellane: and the *latter*, from not apprehending the true meaſure and degree of the tragic mixture. To correct both theſe, the poet gives the exacteſt idea of the ſatyrs, in the image of a Roman matron, ſharing in the mirth of a religious feſtival. The occaſion obliged to ſome freedoms; and yet the dignity of her character demanded a decent reſerve.

234. NON EGO INORNATA &c.] The ſcope of theſe lines may be to regulate the ſatyric ſtyle, by the idea of its character, before given, in the alluſion to a Roman matron. Conformably to that idea, a plain, unornamented expreſſion [from ℣ 234 to 236] muſt not always be uſed. The three following lines inforce this general application by example.

If the exact reader find himſelf diſſatisfied with this gloſs, which ſeems the only one, the words, as they now ſtand, will bear, he may, perhaps, incline to admit the following conjecture, which propoſes to read, inſtead of *inornata*, *honorata*. I. The context, I think, requires this change. For the two faults obſerved above [℣ 229, 30.] were, 1. a too low expreſſion, and, 2. a too lofty. Correſponding to this double charge, the poet having fixed the idea of this ſpecies of compoſition [℣ 231, 2, 3.] ſhould naturally be

be led to apply it to both points in queſtion: 1. to the comic part, in preſcribing the true meaſure of its condeſcenſion, and, 2. to the tragic, in ſettling the true bounds of its elevation. And this, according to the reading here offered, the poet doth, only in an inverted order. The ſenſe of the whole would be this,

1. *Non ego* HONORATA *& dominantia nomina ſolum*
Verbaque, Piſones, ſatyrorum ſcriptor amabo:

i. e. in the tragic ſcenes, I would not confine myſelf to ſuch words only, as are in honour, and bear rule in tragic, and the moſt ſerious ſubjects; this ſtatelineſs not agreeing to the condeſcending levity of the ſatyr.

2. *Nec ſic enitar tragico differre colori,*
Ut nihil interſit Davuſne loquatur, & audax
Pythias, emuncto lucrata Simone talentum,
An cuſtos famuluſque Dei Silenus alumni.

i. e. nor, on the contrary, in the comic ſcenes, would I incur the other extreme of a too plain, and vulgar expreſſion, this as little ſuiting its inherent matron-like dignity. But, II. this correction improves the *expreſſion* as well as the *ſenſe*. For beſides the oppoſition, implied in the disjunctive, *nec*, which is this way reſtored, *dominantia* hath now its genuine ſenſe, and not that ſtrange and foreign one forced upon it out of the Greek language. As connected with *honorata*,

rata, it becomes a metaphor, elegantly purſued; and hath too a ſingular propriety, the poet here ſpeaking of figurative terms. And then, for *honorata* itſelf, it ſeems to have been a familiar mode of expreſſion with Horace. Thus [2 Ep. ii. 112.] *honore indigna vocabula* are ſuch words as have *parum ſplendoris* and are *ſine pondere*, And "*quæ ſunt in honore vocabula*" is ſpoken of the contrary ones, ſuch as are fit to enter into a ſerious tragic compoſition, in this very epiſtle, ℣ 71.

240. EX NOTO FICTUM &c.] This precept [from ℣ 240 to 244] is analogous to that, before given [℣ 129.] concerning tragedy. It directs to form the ſatyrs out of a known ſubject. The reaſons are, in general, the ſame for both. Only one ſeems peculiar to the ſatyrs. For the caſt of them being neceſſarily romantic, and the perſons, thoſe fantaſtic beings, called ſatyrs, the τὸ ὅμοιον, or probable, will require the ſubject to have gained a popular belief, without which the repreſentation muſt appear unnatural. Now theſe ſubjects, which have gained a popular belief, in conſequence of old tradition, and their frequent celebration in the poets, are what Horace calls *nota*; juſt as newly invented ſubjects, or, which comes to the ſame thing, ſuch as had not been employed by other writers, *inditta*, he, on a like occaſion, terms *ignota*. The connection lies thus. Having mentioned *Silenus* in ℣ 239, one of the commoneſt characters in this drama,

drama, an objection immediately offers itſelf; "but "what good poet will ingage in ſubjects and cha- "racters ſo trite and hackney'd?" The anſwer is, *ex noto fictum carmen ſequar*, i. e. however trite and well known this and ſome other characters, eſſential to the ſatyr, are, and muſt be; yet will there be ſtill room for fiction and genius to ſhew itſelf. The conduct and diſpoſition of the play may be wholly new, and above the ability of common writers, *tantum ſeries juncturaque pollet.*

244. SYLVIS DEDUCTI CAVEANT &c.] Having before [℣232.] ſettled the true idea of the ſatyric ſtyle in general, he now treats of the peculiar language of the ſatyrs themſelves. This common ſenſe demands to be in conformity with their ſylvan character, neither affectedly tender and gallant, on the one hand; nor groſsly, and offenſively obſcene, on the other. The *firſt* of theſe cautions ſeems levelled at a falſe improvement, which, on the introduction of the Roman ſatyr, was probably attempted on the ſimple, rude plan of the Greek, without conſidering the ruſtic extraction and manners of the fauns and ſatyrs. The *latter*, obliquely glances at the impurities of the Atellane, whoſe licentious ribaldry, as hath been obſerved, would, of courſe, infect the firſt eſſays of the Roman ſatyr.

248. OF-

248. OFFENDENTUR ENIM QUIBUS EST EQUUS ED PATER ET RES.

The poet, in his endeavour to reclaim his countrymen from the *taſte obſcene*, very politely, by a common figure, repreſents that as being the *fact*, which he wiſhed to be ſo. For what reception the rankeſt obſcenities met with on the Roman ſtage we learn from Ovid's account of the ſucceſs of the MIMI:

Nobilis hos virgo, matronaque virque puerque,
Spectat: et è magnâ parte ſenatus *adeſt.*
Triſt. ii. ℣ 105.

This, indeed, was not till ſome time after the date of this epiſtle. But we may gueſs from hence what muſt have been the tendency of the general diſpoſition, and may ſee to how little effect the poet had laboured to divert the public attention from the *Mimes* to his reformed *Atellanes*.

251. SYLLABA LONGA BREVI, &c.] This whole critique on the ſatyrs concludes with ſome directions about the Iambic verſe. When the commentary aſſerts, that this metre was common to tragedy and the ſatyrs, this is not to be taken ſtrictly; the ſatyrs, in this reſpect, as in every other, ſuſtaining a ſort of intermediate character betwixt tragedy and comedy. For, accurately ſpeaking, their proper meaſure, as the Grammarians teach, was the Iambic, enlivened with the

the tribrachys. "*Gaudent* [Victor. L. ii. c. met. "Iamb.] *triſyllabo pede & maxime tribrache.*" Yet there was likeneſs enough to conſider this whole affair of the metre under the ſame head. The Roman dramatic writers were very careleſs in their verſification, which aroſe, as is hinted, ℣259, from an immoderate and undiſtinguiſhing veneration of their old poets.

264. ET DATA ROMANIS VENIA EST INDIGNA POETIS.] It appears certainly, that what is ſaid here concerning the metre of dramatic poems, was peculiarly calculated for the correction of the Roman negligence, and inaccuracy in this reſpect. This, if it had not been ſo expreſsly told us, would have been ſeen from the few remaining fragments of the old Latin plays, in which a remarkable careleſſneſs of numbers is obſerved. This gives a preſumption, that with the like advantage of conſulting them, it would alſo appear, that the reſt of the poet's rules were directed to the ſame end, and that even ſuch, as are delivered in the moſt abſolute and general form, had a peculiar reference, agreeably to what is here taught of the plan of this poem, to the correſponding defects in the ſtate of the Roman ſtage.

270. AT VESTRI PROAVI PLAUTINOS ET NUMEROS ET LAUDAVERE SALES; NIMIUM PATIENTER UTRUMQUE, NE DICAM STULTE, MIRATI;] It hath been thought ſtrange, that Horace ſhould

ſhould paſs ſo ſevere a cenſure on the *wit* of Plautus, which yet appeared to Cicero ſo admirable, that he ſpeaks of it as *elegans, urbanum, ingenioſum, facetum.* [De Off. i. 29.] Nor can it be ſaid, that this difference of judgment was owing to the improved delicacy of taſte for wit, in the Auguſtan age, ſince it doth not appear, that Horace's own jokes, when he attempts to divert us in this way, are at all better than Cicero's.

The common anſwer, ſo far as it reſpects the poet, is, I believe, the true one: "that endeavouring to "beat down the exceſſive veneration of the elder Ro-"man poets, and among the reſt, (as appears from "2 Ep. i. and A. P. 54.) of Plautus, he cenſures, "without reſerve, every the leaſt defect in his wri-"tings; though, in general, he agreed with Cicero "in admiring him." But then this was all. For that he was not ſo over-nice as to diſlike Plautus' wit in the main, and, but in this view, probably had not criticized him at all, I collect from his expreſs approbation of the wit of the old *comedy*; which certainly was not more delicate, than that of *Plautus*.

ridiculum acri
Fortius & melius magnas plerumque ſecat res.
Illi, ſcripta quibus comœdia priſca viris eſt,
Hoc ſtabant, HOC SUNT IMITANDI. I S. x. 15.

I know, it hath been thought, that, even in this very place, where he cenſures the wit of Plautus, he directs us *ad Græca exemplaria*, i. e. as his critics underſtand

derſtand him, to Ariſtophanes, and the other writers of the old Comedy; but ſuch a direction in this place, were altogether improper, and the ſuppoſition is, beſides, a palpable miſtake. For the *Græca exemplaria* are referred to *only*, as models in exact verſification, as the tenor of the place fully ſhews. And what Horace afterwards remarks on the wit of Plautus, in addition to the obſervations on metre, is a new and diſtinct criticiſm, and hath no kind of reference to the preceding direction. But ſtill, as I ſaid, Horace appears no ſuch enemy to the old comic wit, as, without the particular reaſon aſſigned, to have ſo ſeverely condemned it. The difficulty is to account for Cicero's ſo peculiar admiration of it, and that a taſte, otherwiſe exact, as his, ſhould delight in the coarſe humour of Plautus, and the old comedy The caſe, I believe, was this:

Cicero had imbib'd a ſtrong reliſh of the frank and libertine wit of the old comedy, as beſt ſuited to the genius of popular eloquence; which, though it demands to be tempered with ſome urbanity, yet never attains its end ſo effectually, as when let down and accommodated, in ſome certain degree, to the general taſte and manners of the people. This Cicero in effect owns, when he tells us, the main end of jeſting at the bar [De Orat. ccxl.] is, not to acquire the credit of conſummate humour, but to carry the cauſe, *ut proficiamus aliquid:* that is, *to make an impreſſion on the people*; which is generally, we know, better

better done by a coarſer joke, than by the elegance of refined raillery. And that this was the real ground of Cicero's preference of the old comedy to the new, may be concluded, not only from the nature of the thing, and his own example (for he was ever reckoned intemperate in his jeſts, which by no means anſwer to the elegance of his character) but is certainly collected from what Quintilian, in his account of it, expreſsly obſerves of the old comedy, *Neſcio an ulla poeſis (poſt Homerum &) aut ſimilior ſit oratoribus, aut ad oratores faciendos aptior.* The reaſon, doubtleſs, was, that *ſtrength*, and *prompt and eloquent freedom*, *Vires & facundiſſima libertas*, which he had before obſerved, ſo peculiarly belonged to it.

And this, I think, will go ſome way towards clearing an embaraſſing circumſtance in the hiſtory of the Roman learning, which I know not, if any writer hath yet taken notice of. It is, that though Menander and the authors of the new comedy were afterwards admired, as the only maſters of the comic drama, yet this does not appear to have been een, or, at leaſt, ſo fully acknowledged, by the Roman writers, till after the Auguſtan age; notwithſtanding that the Roman taſte was, from that time, viſibly declining. The reaſon, I doubt not, was, hat the popular eloquence, which continued, in a good degree of vigour, to that time, participating more of the freedom of the *old* comic banter, and reecting, as improper to its end, the refinements of the *new*, inſenſibly depraved the public taſte; which, by

by degrees only, and not till a ſtudied and cautious declamation had, by the neceſſary influence of abſolute power, ſucceeded to the liberty of their old oratory, was fully reconciled to the delicacy and ſtrict decorum of Menander's wit. Even the caſe of Terence, which, at firſt ſight, might ſeem to bear hard againſt it, confirms this account. This poet, ſtruck with the ſupreme elegance of Menander's manner, and attempting too ſoon, before the public taſte was ſufficiently formed for it, to bring it on the ſtage, had occaſion for all the credit, his noble patrons could give him, to ſupport himſelf againſt the popular clamor. What was the object of that *clamour*, we learn from a curious paſſage in one of his prologues, where his adverſary is made to object,

Quas—fecit—fabulas
Tenui eſſe oratione & ſcriptura levi. Prol. ad Phorm.

The ſenſe of which is not, as his commentators have idly thought, *that his ſtyle was low and trifling*, for this could never be pretended, but *that his dialogue was inſipid, and his characters, and, in general, his whole compoſition, without that comic heightening, which their vitiated taſtes required.* This further appears from thoſe common verſes of Cæſar, where characterizing the genius of Terence's plays, as devoid of this comic ſpirit, he calls them *lenia ſcripta:*

LENIBUS *atque utinam* SCRIPTIS *adjuncta foret vis* COMICA:

words, which are the cleareſt comment on the lines in queſtion.

But this famous judgment of Cæſar deſerves to be ſcrutinized more narrowly. For it may be ſaid "that "by *vis comica* I ſuppoſe him to mean the comic drollery of the *old* and *middle* comedy, whence it is more probable he meant the elegant but high humour of the beſt writers of the *new*, particularly of Menander; why elſe doth he call Terence, *Dimidiate Menander?*" There is the more force in this objection, as it muſt be owned *the elegant but high humour*, here mentioned, is of the trueſt merit in comedy; and becauſe Menander, of whom the antients ſpeak ſo hohourably, and whom we only know by their encomiums, may be reaſonably thought to have excelled in it. What occurs in anſwer to it, is this.

1. The Antients are generally allowed to have had very little of what we now underſtand by *comic humour*. Lucian is the *firſt*, indeed the only one, who hath properly left us any conſiderable ſpecimens of it. And he is almoſt modern with regard to the writers under conſideration. But,

2. That *Menander and the writers of the new comedy did not excel in it* is probable for theſe reaſons.

1. The moſt judicious critic of antiquity, when he is purpoſely conſidering the excellencies of the Greek comedians, and, what is more, expoſing the comparative deficiencies of the Roman, ſays not a word of it. He thinks, indeed, that *Terence*'s, which yet he pronounces to be moſt elegant, is but the fainteſt ſhadow of

of the Greek, comedy. But then his reaſon is *quod ſermo ipſe Romanus non recipere videatur illam ſolis conceſſam Atticis venerem.* [L. x. 1.] It ſeems then as if the main defect, which this critic obſerved in Terence's comedy, was a want of that inexplicable grace of language, which ſo peculiarly belonged to the Greeks; a grace of ſo ſubtle a nature that even they could only catch it in one dialect—*quando eam ne Græci quidem in alio genere linguæ non obtinuerint.* [ib.]"

2. Some of Terence's plays are direct tranſlations from Menander. And the comic humour, ſuppoſed in the objection, being of the trueſt taſte, no reaſon can be imagined why the poet ſhould ſo induſtriouſly avoid to transfuſe this laſt and higheſt grace into his comedy. Eſpecially ſince the popular cry againſt him proceeded from hence, that he was wanting in comic pleaſantry; a *want* which by a ſtricter attention to this virtue of his great original, ſuppoſing Menander to have been poſſeſſed of it, he might ſo eaſily have ſupplied. And leſt it ſhould be thought he omitted to do this, as not conceiving any thing of this *virtue*, or as not approving it, we find in him, but rarely indeed, ſome delicate touches, which approach as nearly as any thing in antiquity to this genuine comic humour. Of which kind is that in the *Hecyra:*

Tum tu igitur nihil adtuliſti huc plus unâ ſententiâ?

For theſe reaſons I ſhould ſuppoſe that *Menander* and the writers of the new comedy, from whom Terence copied, had little of this beauty.

But what ſhall we ſay then to Cæſar's *dimidiate Menander?* It refers, I believe, ſolely to what Quintilian, as we have ſeen, obſerved, that with all his æmulation of Attic elegance he was unable, thro' the native ſtubborneſs of the Latin tongue, to come up to the Greek comedy. The very text of Cæſar leads to this meaning.

Tu quoque, tu in ſummis, O! dimidiate Menander,
Poneris et merito PURI SERMONIS AMATOR.

His excellence conſiſted in the *purity and urbanity of his expreſſion*, in which praiſe if he ſtill fell ſhort of his maſter, the fault was not in him but the intractability of his language. And in this view Cæſar's addreſs carries with it the higheſt *compliment*. Quintilian had ſaid in relation to this point, *Vix levem conſequimur umbram.* But Cæſar, in a fond admiration of his merit, cries out,

Tu quoque, TU *in ſummis,* Ô DIMIDIATE MENANDER.

His *cenſure* of him is delivered in the following lines:

Lenibus atque utinam ſcriptis adjuncta foret vis
Comica, ut æquato virtus polleret honore
Cum Græcis, neque in hâc deſpectus parte jaceres;
Unum hoc maceror et doleo tibi deeſſe, Terenti.

Which,

Which, again, gives no countenance to the ſuppoſition of Menander's excelling in *comic humour*. For he does not ſay, that with the addition of this talent he had equalled *Menander*, but in general, the GREEKS—*æquato virtus polleret honore cum* GRÆCIS. And this was what occaſioned Cæſar's regret. He wiſhed to ſee him unite all the merits of the Greek comedy. As far as the Latin tongue would permit, he had ſhewn himſelf a maſter of the elegance of the *new*. What he further required in him was the ſtrong wit and ſatyr of the *old*. His favourite had then rivalled, in every praiſe, the Greek writers.

And, if this be admitted, nothing hinders but that by *vis comica* Cæſar may be underſtood to mean (how conſiſtently with the admired urbanity of Terence is not the queſtion) the comic pleaſantry of the middle or old comedy.

The thing indeed could hardly be otherwiſe. For Plautus, who chiefly copied from the *middle* comedy, had, by the drollery of his wit, and the buffoon pleaſantry of his ſcenes, ſo enchanted the people as to continue the reigning favourite of the ſtage, even long after Afranius and Terence had appeared on it. Nay the humour continued thro' the Auguſtan age [a], when, as we learn from Horace, in many parts of his writings, the public applauſe ſtill followed Plautus;

[a] And no wonder, when as Suetonius tells us, the emperor himſelf was ſo delighted with the old comedy. [85. 5.]

in whom though himſelf could ſee many faults, yet he does not appear to have gone ſo far, as, upon the whole, to give the preference to Terence. Afterwards indeed the caſe altered. Paterculus admires; and Plutarch and Quintilian are perfectly charmed: *ita omnem vitæ imaginem expreſſit, ita eſt omnibus rebus, perſonis, affectibus accommodatus.* This character, one would think, ſhould have fitted him alſo for a complete model to the orator. And this, as might be expected, was Quintilian's opinion. For, though he ſaw, as appears from the paſſage already quoted, that the writers of the old comedy were, in fact, *the likeſt to orators, and the moſt proper to form them to the practice of the Forum*, yet in admiration of the abſolute perfection of Menander's manner, and criticizing him by the rules of a juſt and accurate rhetoric, and not at all in the views of a practical orator, he pronounces him to be a complete pattern of oratorial excellence: *vel unus, diligenter lectus, ad cuncta efficienda ſufficiat*, L. x. c. 1. Yet Cicero, it ſeems, thought otherwiſe; for he does not ſo much as mention Menander in his rhetorical books, though he is very large in commending the authors of the old Greek comedy. The reaſon was unqueſtionably that we have been explaining: The delicate obſervance of decorum, for which this poet was ſo famous, *in omnibus mire cuſtoditur ab hoc poeta decorum*, rendered him an unfit model for a popular ſpeaker, eſpecially in Rome, where an orator was much more likely to carry his point by the *vis comica*, the *broader mirth* of Ariſto-

Ariſtophanes, or Plautus, than by the delicate raillerıes, and exquiſite paintings of Menander, or Terence.

273. SI MODO EGO ET VOS SCIMUS INURBANUM LEPIDO SEPONERE DICTO.] It was very late ere the ancients became acquainted with this diſtinction. Indeed it does not appear, they ever poſſeſſed it in that ſupreme degree, which might have been expected from their exquiſite diſcernment in other inſtances. Even Horace himſelf, though his pictures of life are commonly the moſt delicate, and wrought up in the higheſt beauty of humour, yet, when he affects the *plaiſant*, and purpoſely aims at the comic ſtyle and manner, is obſerved to ſink beneath himſelf extremely. The truth is, there is ſomething low, and what the French call *groſſier*, in the whole caſt of antient wit; which is rather a kind of rude, illiberal ſatire, then a juſt and temperate ridicule, reſtrained by the exact rules of civility and good ſenſe. This a celebrated writer, who ſeems willing to think the moſt favourably of the antient wits, in effect owns, when, after quoting certain inſtances of their raillery, he ſays, *Ces exemples, quoique vifs & bons en leur genre, ont quelque choſe de trop dur, qui ne s'accommoderoit pas à nôtre maniere de vivre; & ce ſeroit ce que nous appellons rompre en viſiere, que de dire en face des veritez auſſi fortes que celles-là.* [Rec. de bons Contes & de bons Mots, p. 89.] This rudeneſs, complained of, appears in nothing more evident, than in their

perpetual banter on corporal infirmities, which runs through all the wits both of Greece and Rome. And to ſhew us, that this was not a practice, they allowed themſelves in againſt rule, Cicero mentions corporal infirmities [De Or. L. ii. c. 59.] as one of the moſt legitimate ſources of the RIDICULOUS. *Eſt deformitatis & corporis vitiorum ſatis bella materies.* And in another place, *Valde ridentur etiam imagines, quæ fere in deformitatem, aut in aliquod vitium corporis ducuntur cum ſimilitudine turpioris, &c.* [ib. c. 66.] And this, which is very remarkable, though they ſaw the abſurdity of it, as appears from the anſwer of Lamia, recorded by Cicero, to a joke of this kind, *Non potui mihi formam ipſe fingere,* [ib. c. 65.] The univerſal prevalence of a practice ſo abſurd in itſelf, and ſeen by themſelves to be ſo, in the two politeſt ſtates of the old world, muſt needs have ſprung from ſome very *general*, and *powerful* cauſe; which, becauſe it hath not, that I know of, been conſidered by any writer, I ſhall here attempt to open and explain. The ſubject is curious, and would require a volume to do it juſtice. I can only hint at the principal reaſons, which appear to me to have been theſe.

I. *The free, and popular government of thoſe ſtates.* This, preſerving an equality of condition, and thereby ſpreading a fearleſsneſs and independency through all ranks and orders of men, of courſe produced and indulged the utmoſt freedom of expreſſion, uninfluenced by hopes of favour, and unawed by fear of perſonal offence; the two ſources, from whence the civility

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of a more cautious ridicule is derived. Now of all the ſpecies of raillery, the moſt natural and *obvious* to a people unreſtrained by theſe cauſes, is ever the *coarſeſt*, ſuch as that on corporal deformities; as appears from its prevailing every where, in all forms of government, among the loweſt of the people, betwixt whom thoſe cauſes never ſubſiſt. But this reaſon involves in it ſome particulars, which deſerve to be conſidered. 1. The *orators*, who catched it from the conſtitution themſelves, contributed in their turn to forward and help on this diſpoſition to uncivilized mirth. For, the form of their government requiring immediate, and almoſt continual, applications to the people; and the nature of ſuch applications giving frequent exerciſe to their wit, it was natural for them to ſuit it to the capacities of their auditory; if indeed they had ſeen better themſelves. Thus we find the orators in the Forum, even in the later times of the Roman republic, expoſing their adverſary to the broad mirth of the populace, by enlarging on his *low ſtature*, *ugly face*, or *diſtorted chin*. Inſtances of which may be met with in Cicero's treatiſe De oratore; and even, as hath been obſerved, in ſome orations and other pieces of Cicero himſelf. 2. From the *Forum* the humour inſenſibly ſpread amongſt all orders, and above all, amongſt the writers for the ſtage, where it was kept up in its full vigour, or rather heightened to a further extravagance, the laughter of the people being its more immediate and direct aim. But, the ſtage not only conformed, as of courſe

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it would, to the ſpirit of the times (which, for the reaſon already given, were none of the moſt obſervant of decorum) but, as we ſhall alſo find, it had perhaps the greateſt influence in *producing and forming that ſpirit itſelf*. This will appear, if we recollect, in few words, *the riſe, progreſs, and character of the antient ſtage*. The Greek drama, we know, had its origin from the looſe, licentious raillery of the rout of Bacchus, indulging to themſelves the freeſt ſallies of taunt and invective, as would beſt ſuit to lawleſs natures, inſpirited by feſtal mirth, and made extravagant by wine. Hence aroſe, and with a character anſwering to this original, the *ſatyric drama*; the ſpirit of which was afterwards, in good meaſure, revived and continued in the old comedy, and itſelf preſerved, though with conſiderable alteration in the form, through all the ſeveral periods of the Greek ſtage; even when tragedy, which aroſe out of it, was brought to its laſt perfection. Much the ſame may be obſerved of the *Roman* drama, which, we are told, had its riſe in the unreſtrained feſtivity of the ruſtic youth. This gave occaſion to their *Satyræ*, that is, medleys of an irregular form, acted for the diverſion of the people. And, when afterwards Livius Andronicus had, by a further reform, reduced theſe *Satyræ* into regular tragedies, another ſpecies of buffoon ridicule was cultivated, under the name of *Atellanæ fabulæ*; which according to Diomedes' character of them, *were replete with jocular witticiſms, and very much reſembled the Greek ſatyrs. Dictis jo-*

cularibus

cularibus refertæ, ſimiles fere ſunt ſatyricis fabulis Græcorum. Theſe were ever after retained, and annexed to their moſt regular dramatic entertainments in Rome, juſt as the *ſatyrs* were in Greece; and this (as was ſeen in its place) though much pains was taken to reform, if not wholly remove, them. But to ſhew how ſtrong the paſſion of the Romans was for this rude illiberal banter, even the licentious character of the *Atellanes* did not fully ſatisfy them; but, as if they were determined to ſtick to their genuine ruſticity, they continued the *Satyræ* themſelves, under the name of *Exodia*, that is farces of the groſſeſt and moſt abſurd compoſition; which, to heighten the mirth of the day, were commonly interwoven with the Atellane pieces. The reaſon of the continuance of ſuch ribaldry in the politeſt ages of Greece and Rome hath been inquired into. At preſent it appears, what effect it muſt neceſſarily have upon the public taſte.

II. Another cauſe connected with the foregoing, and riſing out of it, ſeems to have been the feſtal licence of particular ſeaſons, ſuch as the *Dionyſia*, and *Panathenæa*, amongſt the Greeks; and the *Bacchanalia* and *Saturnalia*, at Rome. Theſe latter, it is obſervable, were continued to the lateſt period of the Roman empire, preſerving in them an image, as well of the frank and libertine wit of their old ſtage, as of the original equality and independency of their old times. Quintilian thinks, that, with ſome regulation, good uſe might have been made of theſe ſeaſons

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of licence, for the cultivating a juſt ſpirit of raillery in the orators of his time. As it was, there is no doubt, they helped much to vitiate and deprave it. His words are theſe: *Quin illæ ipſæ, quæ* DICTA *ſunt ac vocantur, quas certis diebus feſtæ licentiæ dicere ſolebamus, ſi paulum adhibita ratione fingerentur, aut aliquid in his ſerium quoque eſſet admixtum, plurimum poterunt utilitatis afferre: quæ nunc juvenum, aut ſibi ludentium exercitatio eſt.* [Quint. L. iv. c. 3.] Beſides, in Greece, the jeſter was a character by profeſſion, neceſſary to the pleaſantry of private feaſts, and as we learn from the fine ſatyr in Xenophon's *Sympoſium*, even in that polite age, welcome to all companies[a].

[a] This is further confirmed from Lucian, who, in the deſcription of a ſplendid feaſt in his ΛΑΕΚΤΡΥΩΝ, and in the *Sympoſium of his* ΛΑΠΙΘΑΙ, brings in the ΓΕΛΩΤΟΠΟΙΟΙ as neceſſary attendants on the entertainment.—But the reader will not take what is ſaid of the *fine ſatyr* of Xenophon's Sympoſium, who hath not obſerved, that this ſort of compoſitions, which were in great credit with the ancients, are of the nature of dramas, ΗΘΙΚΟΙ ΛΟΓΟΙ, as Ariſtotle would call them. In which the dialogiſts, who are real perſonages as in the *old comedy*, give a lively, and ſometimes exaggerated expreſſion of their own characters. Under this *idea* of a Sympoſium we are prepared to expect *bad* characters as well as *good*. Nothing in the *kind* of compoſition itſelf confined the writer to the *latter*; and the decorum of a *feſtal converſation*, which in a republic eſpecially would have a mixture of ſatyr in it, ſeemed to demand the *former*. We ſee then the undoubted purpoſe of Xenophon in the perſons of his JESTER and SYRACUSIAN; and of Plato, in thoſe of ARISTO-

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From theſe reaſons I think it not difficult to account for the coarſeneſs of antient wit. The free genius of the Greek and Roman conſtitution was unqueſtionably its main ſpring and ſupport. But, when this character of their government was ſeconded by the freedom of their demagogues, the petulance of the ſtage, and the uncontrouled licence of recurring feſtival ſolemnities, it was no wonder, the illiberal manner ſo thoroughly infected all ranks and degrees of the people, as by no after diligence and refinement wholly to be removed. And this theory is indeed confirmed by *fact*. For, when now the tyranny of one man had ingroſſed the power, and oppreſſed the liberties, of Greece, their ſtage refined, their wit poliſhed, and Menander wrote. And though a thorough reform was never made in the Roman ſtage, partly, as Quintilian thinks, from the intractability

PHANES and ſome others. Where we may further take notice, that, to prevent the abuſe and miſconſtruction, to which theſe perſonated diſcourſes are ever liable, Socrates is brought in to correct the looſeneſs of them, in both dialogues, and in ſome meaſure doth the office of the dramatic chorus, BONIS FAVENDI. But it is the leſs ſtrange that the moderns have not apprehended the genius of theſe *Sympoſia*, when Athenæus, who profeſſedly criticiſes them, and one would think, have a better opportunity of knowing their real character, hath betrayed the groſſeſt ignorance about them.—I can but juſt hint theſe things which might afford curious matter for a diſſertation. But enough is ſaid to let the intelligent reader into the true ſecret of theſe *convivial dialogues*, and to explain the ground of the encomium here paſſed upon *one* of them.

of

of their language, but chiefly it may be, as to the point in queſtion, from the long continuance of their rude farcical ſhews, yet ſomething like this appears to have followed upon the loſs of their freedom; as is plain from the improved delicacy of their later critics; who, as Quintilian and Plutarch, are very profuſe in their encomiums on Menander, and the *new* comedy; whereas we find little ſaid of it by the Auguſtan writers, who ſeem generally to have preferred the coarſer wit and plaiſantry of the *old*. The ſtate of modern wit too confirms this account. For it has grown up, for the moſt part, under limited monarchies, in which their ſcenical entertainments were more moderate, or for plain reaſons muſt leſs affect the public taſte. Whenever therefore a turn for letters has prevailed, a poignant, but liberal kind of wit hath generally ſprung up with it. Where it is worth obſerving, the growing tyranny in ſome ſtates hath either extinguiſhed it intirely, or refined it into an effeminate, and timid delicacy, as the growing licentiouſneſs in others, hath ſunk it into a rude and brutal coarſeneſs; whilſt, by a due mixture of liberty and letters, we have ſeen it acquire a proper temperament at home, and, as managed by our beſt writers, exhibit a ſpecimen of that ſtrong, yet elegant ridicule, which hath never yet been equalled by any other nation in the world.

275. IGNOTUM TRAGICÆ GENUS INVENISSE CAMOENÆ &c.] The poet, having juſt remarked the neg-

negligence of the Roman writers, in two or three inſtances, and, at the ſame time recommended to them the ſuperior care and accuracy of the Greeks (all which is elegantly preparatory to the laſt diviſion of the epiſtle) proceeds in a ſhort view of the Greek drama, to inſinuate, as well, the ſucceſsful pains of the Greek writers, as the real ſtate of the Roman ſtage; the complete glory of which could only be expected as immediately follows, from a ſpirit of diligence and correctneſs. As this whole connection is clear and eaſy, ſo is the peculiar method, in which it is conducted, extremely proper. 1. To ſhew, how great the advantage of their ſituation was over that of the Greeks, he obſerves, that the latter had the whole conſtitution of the drama to invent and regulate; which yet, by the application and growing experience of their poets, was ſoon effected; their tragedy, all rude and ſhapeleſs, as it was, in the cart of Theſpis, appearing in its juſt form and proportion on the ſtage of Æſchylus; and their comedy alſo (which, from that time, began to be cultivated) aſſerting its proper character, and, but for the culpable omiſſion of a chorus, reaching the full extent and perfection of its kind.

2. To ſhew, what ſtill remained to them, he brings down the hiſtory of tragedy no lower than Æſchylus; under whom it received its due form and all the eſſentials of its nature, yet ſtill wanted, to its abſolute perfection, the further accuracy and correctneſs of a Sophocles. And, for their comedy, he hints the prin-

cipal defect of that; its omiſſion, after the manner of the new comedy, of the chorus. There is great addreſs in this conduct. The cenſure alſo implied in it, is perfectly juſt. For, 1. the character of the Roman tragedy, in the times of Horace, was exactly that of Æſchylus. Æſchylus, ſays Quinctilian, was the firſt, "*qui protulit tragœdias*," i. e. who compoſed true legitimate tragedies, *ſublimis & gravis & grandiloquus ſæpe uſque ad vitium; ſed rudis in pleriſque & incompoſitus* [L. x. c. 1.] the very deſcription, which Horace gives [2 Ep. i. 165.] of the Roman tragedy.

natura ſublimis & acer,
Nam ſpirat tragicum ſatis & feliciter audet;
Sed turpem putat inſcitus metuitque lituram.

2. The ſtate of their comedy, as managed by their beſt writers, Afranius and Terence, was, indeed, much more complete; yet wanted the chorus, which, in the judgment of the poet, it ſeems, was equally neceſſary to the perfection of this, as of the other drama.

3. But the application is made in expreſs terms.

Nil intentatum noſtri liquere poetæ, &c.

i. e. our poets, as well as the Greek, have, in ſome degree, applied themſelves to improve and regulate the ſtage. In particular, a late innovation, in taking their ſubjects, both of tragedy and comedy, from domeſtic facts, is highly to be applauded. Their ſole diſadvantage is, *a neglect or contempt of that labour*

and

and accuracy, which gave the laſt perfection to the Greek ſcene.

After this clear and natural expoſition of the connection of theſe lines, all the difficulties, that have been found in them by certain great critics, vaniſh of themſelves. And the reader now ſees (what the ſagacious Heinſius thought impoſſible to be ſhewn) an ἀκολουθίαν, or conſiſtent, natural order in this part of the epiſtle; which was in imminent danger of loſing all its grace and beauty, by the wild tranſpoſitions of that critic.

278. POST HUNC PERSONAE PALLAEQUE, &c.] M. *Dacier* hath here puzzled himſelf with a difficulty of his own raiſing. He wonders, that Horace ſhould omit, in this hiſtory, the other improvements of Æſchylus, mentioned by Ariſtotle, and that Ariſtotle, in his turn, ſhould omit thoſe, mentioned by Horace The truth is, neither of them intended a complete account of the improvements of the Greek ſtage; but only ſo much of them, as was neceſſary to the views of each. Ariſtotle, treating of the *internal* conſtitution of the drama, ſpeaks of ſuch changes, made in it by Æſchylus, as reſpected that end. Horace treating in general of its *form*, as perfected by the pains and application of the ſame poet, ſelects thoſe improvements only, which contraſt beſt to the rude eſſays of Theſpis, and, while they imply the reſt, exhibit tragedy, as it were, in her proper perſon,

on the ſtage. The reader feels the effect of this in the poetry.

288. VEL QUI PRAETEXTAS, VEL QUI DOCUERE TOGATAS.] There hath been much difficulty here in ſettling a very plain point. The queſtion is, whether *prætextas* means *tragedy*, or a ſpecies of *comedy*? The anſwer is very clear from Diomedes, whoſe account is, in ſhort, this. "[1] *Togatæ* is a general "term for all ſorts of Latin plays, adopting the Roman "cuſtoms and dreſſes; as *Palliatæ* is, for all, adopting "the Græcian. Of the *Togatæ*, the ſeveral[2] ſpecies are, "1. *Prætexta*, or *prætextata*, in which Roman kings "or generals were introduced, and is ſo called, be-"cauſe the *prætexta* was the diſtinguiſhing habit of "ſuch perſons. 2. *Tabernaria* frequently called[3] *To-"gata*, tho' that word, as we have ſeen, had pro-"perly a larger ſenſe. 3. *Atellana*. 4. *Planipedis*." He next marks the difference of theſe ſeveral ſorts of the *Togatæ*, from the ſimilar, correſponding ones of the *Palliatæ*, which are theſe: "1.[4] Tragœdia, "abſolutely ſo ſtyled. 2.[5] Comœdia. 3.[6] Satyri. 4.[7] Μῖμος." [Theſe four ſorts of the *palliatæ* were alſo probably in uſe at Rome; certainly, at leaſt, the two former.] It appears then from hence, that *prætextata* was properly the Roman tragedy. But he adds, "*Togata prætextata a tragœdia differt*, and "it is alſo ſaid, *to be only like tragedy*, *tragœdiæ ſi-"milis*." What is this difference and this likeneſs? The explanation follows. "[8] Heroes are introduced

" in *tragedy*, ſuch as Oreſtes, Chryſes, and the like. " In the *prætextata*, Brutus, Decius, or Marcellus." So then we ſee, when Græcian characters were introduced, it was called ſimply *tragœdia*; when Roman, *prætextata*; yet both, tragedies. The ſole difference lay in the perſons being foreign or domeſtic. The correſpondence in every other reſpect was exact. The ſame is obſerved of the Roman comedy; when it adopted [9] Greek characters, it was called *comœdia*: when Roman, [10] *Togata Tabernaria*, or [3] *Togata*, ſimply. That the reader may aſſure himſelf of the fidelity of this account, let him take it at large, in the Grammarian's own words. " [1] Togatæ fabulæ dicuntur, " quæ ſcriptæ ſunt ſecundum ritus & habitus homi- " num togatorum, id eſt, Romanorum (Toga nam- " que Romana eſt) ſicut Græcas fabulas ab habitu " æquè palliatas Varro ait nominari. [3] Togatas au- " tem cum ſit generale nomen, ſpecialiter tamen pro " tabernariis, non modo communis error uſurpat, ſed " et poetæ.—Togatarum fabularum [2] ſpecies tot fere " ſunt, quot et palliatarum. Nam prima ſpecies " togatarum, quæ prætextatæ dicuntur, in quibus " peratorum negotia agebantur & publica, et r:g " Romani vel duces inducuntur, perſonarum et argu- " mentorum ſublimitate [4] tragœdiis ſimiles: Prætex- " tatæ autem dicuntur, quia fere regum vel ma " giſtratuum, qui prætexta utuntur, in hujuſmodi fa " bulis acta comprehenduntur. Secunda ſpecies to- " gatarum, quæ tabernariæ dicuntur, humilitate per- " ſonarum & argumentorum ſimilitudine [5] comœdiis

" pares—Tertia ſpecies eſt fabularum latinarum,
" quæ—Atellanæ dictæ ſunt ſimiles [6] ſatyricis fabulis
" Græcis. Quarta ſpecies eſt planipedis, Græce di-
" citur [7] Μῖμος.—Togata prætextata, à [4] tragœdia
" differt. In tragœdia [8] heroes introducuntur. Pa-
" cuvius tragœdias nominibus heroicis ſcripſit Oreſten,
" Creſten, Chryſen, & his ſimilia. Item Accius.
" In prætextata, autem ſcribitur, Brutus, vel Decius,
" vel Marcellus. [10] Togata tabernaria a [5] comœdia
" differt, quod in [9] comœdia Græci ritus inducuntur,
" perſonæque Græcæ, Laches, Soſtrata. In illa vero
" Latinæ." [L. iii. c. de Com & Trag. diff.] With this account of Diomedes agrees perfectly that of *Feſtus*; from which, however, M. Dacier draws a very different concluſion. " Togatarum duplex eſt
" genus: prætextarum—& tabernarium." His inference is, that prætextatæ, as being a ſpecies of the togatæ, muſt needs be comedies; not conſidering that togata is here a generic term, comprehending under it all the ſeveral ſpecies both of tragedy and comedy. After what hath been ſaid, and eſpecially, after the full and deciſive teſtimony of Diomedes, there can no longer be any doubt about the meaning of *prætextas*; and one muſt be ſurprized to find M. Dacier prefacing his long note on this place in the following important manner, *C'eſt un des plus difficiles paſſages d'Horace, & peutêtre celui qu'il eſt le plus mal aiſé d'eclaircir à cauſe du peu de lumiere que nous donnent les auteurs Latins ſur tout ce qui regarde leurs pieces de theatre.*

281. Suc-

281. SUCCESSIT VETUS HIS COMOEDIA, &c.] *i. e.* Comedy began to be cultivated and improved from the time, that tragedy had obtained its end, ἔσχε τὴν ἑαυτῆς φύσιν, under Æschylus. There is no reason to suppose, with some critics, that Horace meant to date his origin from hence. The supposition is, in truth, contradicted by *experience* and the *order of things*. For, as a celebrated French writer observes, "*Le talent d'imiter, qui nous est naturel, nous porte plutôt à la comedie qui roule sur des choses de notre connoissance qu'à la Tragedie, qui prend des sujets plus éloignés de l'usage commun; & en effect, en Greece aussi bien qu'en France, la Comedie est l'ainée de la tragedie.*" [Hist. du Theat. Franc. par M. de Fontenelle.] The *latter* part of this assertion is clear from the piece referred to; and the *other*, which respects Greece, seems countenanced by Aristotle himself [περ. ποιητ. κ. ε.] 'Tis true, Comedy, tho' its rise be every where, at least, as early as that of tragedy, is perfected much later. Menander, we know, appeared long after Æschylus. And, though the French tragedy, to speak with Aristotle, ἔσχε τὴν ἑαυτῆς φύσιν in the hands of Corneille, this cannot be said of their comedy, which was forced to wait for a Moliere, before it arrived at that pitch of perfection. But then this is owing to the superior difficulty of the comic drama. Nor is it any objection that the contrary of this happened

at Rome. For the Romans, when they applied themſelves in earneſt to the ſtage, had not to invent but to imitate or rather *tranſlate*, the perfect models of Greece. And it chanced, for reaſons which I ſhall not ſtay to deduce, that their poets had better ſucceſs in copying their *comedy*, than *tragedy*.

284. TURPITER OBTICUIT—] Evidently becauſe, though the *jus nocendi* was taken away, yet that was no good reaſon, why the chorus ſhould intirely ceaſe. M. Dacier miſtakes the matter. *Le chœur ſe tût ignominieuſement, parceque la loi reprima ſa licence, & que ce fut, à proprement parler, la loi qui le bannit; ce qu' Horace regarde comme une eſpece de flétriſſure. Properly ſpeaking*, the law only aboliſhed the *abuſe* of the chorus. The ignominy lay in dropping the entire uſe of it, on account of this reſtraint. Horace was of opinion, that the chorus ought to have been retained, though the ſtate had abridged it of the licence, it ſo much delighted in, of an illimited, and intemperate ſatyr. *Sublatus chorus fuit*, ſays Scaliger, *cujus illæ videntur eſſe præcipuæ partes, ut potiſſimum quos liberet, læderent.*

286. NEC MINIMUM MERUERE DECUS VESTIGIA GRAECA AUSI DESERERE ET CELEBRARE DOMESTICA FACTA.] This judgment of the poet, recommending domeſtic ſubjects, as fitteſt for the ſtage, may be inforced from many obvious reaſons. As 1. that it renders the drama infinitely more

more *affecting:* and this on many accounts. 1. As a ſubject, taken from our own annals, muſt of courſe carry with it an air of greater probability, at leaſt to the generality of the people, than one borrowed from thoſe of any other nation. 2. As we all find a perſonal intereſt in the ſubject. 3. As it of courſe affords the beſt and eaſieſt opportunities of catching our minds, by frequent and unavoidable references to our manners, prejudices, and cuſtoms. And of how great importance this is, may be learned from hence, that even in the exhibition of foreign characters, dramatic writers have found themſelves obliged to ſacrifice truth and probability to the humour of the people, and to dreſs up their perſonages, contrary to their own better judgment, in ſome degree according to the mode and manners of their reſpective countries [a]. And 4. as the writer himſelf, from an intimate acquaintance with the character and genius of his own nation, will be more likely to draw the manners with life and ſpirit.

[a] "L'étude égale des poëtes de différens tems à plaire "à leurs ſpectateurs, a encore influé dans la maniere de "peindre les characteres. Ceux qui paroiſſent ſur la ſcene "Angloiſe, Eſpagnole, François, ſont plus Anglois, Eſpag-"nols, ou François que Grecs ou Romains, en un mot que "ce qu'ils doivent être. Il ne faut qu'en peu diſcernement "pour s'appercevoir que nos Céſars & nos Achilles, en "gardant même une partie de leur caractere primitif, pren-"nent droit de naturalité dans le païs où ils ſont tranſ-"plantez, ſemblables à ces portraits, qui ſortent de la "main d'un peintre Flamand, Italien, ou François, & "qui portent l'empreinte du païs. On veut plaire à ſa "nation, & rien ne plait tant que la reſemblance de ma-"nieres & de genie." [P. Brumoy, vol. i. p. 200.]

II. Next, which ſhould ever be one great point in view, it renders the drama more generally uſeful in its moral deſtination. For, it being converſant about domeſtic acts, the great inſtruction of the fable more ſenſibly affects us; and the characters exhibited, from the part we take in their good or ill qualities, will more probably influence our conduct.

III. Laſtly, this judgment will deſerve the greater regard, as the conduct recommended was, in fact, the practice of our great models, the Greek writers; in whoſe plays, it is obſervable, there is ſcarcely a ſingle ſcene, which lies out of the confines of Greece.

But, notwithſtanding theſe reaſons, the practice hath, in all times been but little followed. The Romans after ſome few attempts in this way (from whence the poet took the occaſion of delivering it as a dramatic precept) ſoon relapſed into their old uſe; as appears from Seneca's, and the titles of other plays, written in, or after the Auguſtan age. Succeeding times continued the ſame attachment to Grecian, with the addition of an equal fondneſs for Roman, ſubjects. The reaſon in both inſtances hath been ever the ſame: that ſtrong and early prejudice, approaching ſomewhat to adoration, in favour of the illuſtrious names of thoſe two great ſtates. The account of this matter is very eaſy; for their writings, as they furniſh the buſineſs of our younger, and the amuſement of our riper, years, and more eſpecially make the ſtudy of all thoſe, who devote themſelves to poetry and the ſtage,

ſtage, inſenſibly infix in us an exceſſive veneration for all affairs in which they were concerned; inſomuch that no other ſubjects or events ſeem conſiderable enough, or riſe, in any proportion, to our ideas of the dignity of the tragic ſcene, but ſuch as time and long admiration have conſecrated in the annals of their ſtory. Our Shakeſpear was, I think, the firſt that broke through this bondage of claſſical ſuperſtition. And he owed this felicity, as he did ſome others, to his want of what is called the advantage of a learned education. Thus, uninfluenced by the weight of early prepoſſeſſion, he ſtruck at once into the road of nature and common ſenſe: and without deſigning, without knowing it, hath left us in his hiſtorical plays, with all their anomalies, an exacter reſemblance of the Athenian ſtage, than is any where to be found in its moſt profeſs'd admirers and copyiſts.

I will only add, that, for the more ſucceſsful execution of this rule of celebrating domeſtic acts, much will depend on the æra, from whence the ſubject is taken. Times too remote have almoſt the ſame inconveniences, and none of the advantages, which attend the ages of Greece and Rome. And, for thoſe of later date, they are too much familiariz'd to us, and have not as yet acquired that venerable caſt and air, which tragedy demands, and age only can give. There is no fixing this point with preciſion. In the general, that æra is the fitteſt for the poet's purpoſe, which, though freſh enough in our minds to warm and intereſt us in the event of the action, is yet at

ſo great a diſtance from the preſent times, as to have loſt all thoſe mean and diſparaging circumſtances, which unavoidably adhere to recent deeds, and, in ſome meaſure, ſink the nobleſt modern tranſactions to the level of ordinary life.

295. INGENIUM MISERA, &c.] *Sæpe audivi poetam bonum neminem (id quod a Democrito & Platone in ſcriptis relictum eſſe dicunt) ſine inflammatione animorum exiſtere poſſe & ſine quodam afflatu quaſi furoris* [Cic. De orat. L. ii. c. xlvi.] And ſo Petronius, *præcipitandus liber ſpiritus, ut furentis animi vaticinatio appareat* [c. cxviii.] And to the ſame purpoſe every good critic, antient or modern. But who can endure the grimace of thoſe minute *genii*, who, becauſe the truly inſpired, in the ravings of the fit, are *touched* with the flame and fury of enthuſiaſm, muſt, therefore, with a tame, frigid fancy, be laying claim to the ſame fervent and fiery raptures? The fate of theſe *aſpirants* to divinity is that ἐνθυσιᾷν ἑαυτοῖς δοκοῦντες, ὃ βακχεύουσιν, ἀλλὰ παίζουσιν [Longin. περ. υψ. τμημ. χ.] And Quinctilian opens the myſtery of the whole matter: *Quo quiſque ingenio minus valet, hoc ſe magis attollere & dilatare conatur: ut ſtatura breves in digitos eriguntur & plura infirmi minantur. Nam tumidos et corruptos & tinnulos & quocunque alia cacozeliæ genere peccantes, certum habeo, non virium, ſed infirmitatis vitio laborare: ut corpora*

non

non robore, ſed valetudine inflantur: & recto itinere lapſi plerumque divertunt. [L. ii. c. 3.]

298. BONA PARS NON UNGUES, &c.] The conſtant and pitiful affectation of the race, before ſpoken of, who, with the modeſty of laying claim to the *thing*, will be ſure not to omit the *ſign*, and ſo, from fancying an inſpiration, they have *not*, come to adopt every foppery, that has ever diſgraced it in thoſe, who *have*.

308. QUID DECEAT, QUID NON:] *Nihil eſt difficilius quam*, quid deceat, *videre.* Πρέπον *appellant hoc Græci: nos dicamus ſane* Decorum. *De quo præclare et multa præcipiuntur, et res eſt cognitione digniſſima. Hujus ignoratione non modo in vitâ, ſed ſæpiſſime in* POEMATIS *et in oratione peccatur.* [Orator. xxi.]

309. SCRIBENDI RECTE, SAPERE EST ET PRINCIPIUM ET FONS.] The Orator was of the ſame mind, when he ſent his pupil to the academy for inſtruction. *Quis neſcit maximam vim exiſtere oratoris in hominum mentibus vel ad iram, aut dolorem incitandis, vel ab hiſce iiſdem permotionibus ad lenitatem miſericordiamque revocandis? quæ, niſi qui naturas hominum, vimque omnem humanitatis, cauſaſque eas quibus mentes aut incitantur aut reflectuntur, penitus perſpexerit, dicendo, quod volet, perficere non poterit.*

terit. Atqui TOTUS HIC LOCUS PHILOSOPHORUM PROPRIUS VIDETUR. [De Orat. L. i. c. xiii.] And he ſpoke, we know, from his own experience, *having acquired his oratorial ſkill not in the ſchools of the rhetoricians, but the walks of the academy: fateor me oratorem, ſi modo ſim, aut etiam quicunque ſim, non ex rhetorum officinis, ſed ex Academiæ ſpatiis extitiſſe.* [Orat. p. 622. Elz. ed.] But the reaſon he gives for this advice, though common to the poet, whoſe character, as well as the orator's, it is, *poſſe voluntates impellere, quo velis, unde velis, deducere*, is yet, not the only one, which reſpects the poet. For his buſineſs is to *paint*, and that not only, as the orator does, in order to move, but for the ſole end of *pleaſing: ſolam petit voluptatem.* [Quinct. L. x. c. 1.] The boaſt of his art is to catch every different aſpect of nature, and more eſpecially to exhibit the human character in every varying light and form, under which it preſents itſelf. But this is not to be done without an exquiſite ſtudy, and philoſophical knowledge of man; to which end, as is remarked in *n.* on ℣ 317. the Socratic philoſophy is more peculiarly adapted. Add to this, that it is of the genius of true poetry, not only to animate, but to *perſonalize* every thing, *omnia debent eſſe morata.* Hence the indiſpenſable neceſſity of moral ſcience: all poetry being, in effect, what Mr. Dryden ſomewhere calls comedy, THE THEFT OF POETS FROM MANKIND.

310. So-

310. SOCRATICAE CHARTAE.] An admired writer, in many reſpects deſervedly ſo, thus comments on theſe words: "The philoſophical writings, "to which our poet refers, were in themſelves a "kind of poetry, like the *mimes*, or perſonated "pieces of early times, before philoſophy was in "vogue, and when as yet *Dramatical imitation* was "ſcarce formed: or at leaſt, in many parts, not "brought to due perfection. They were pieces, "which, beſides their force of ſtyle, and hidden "numbers, carried a ſort of *action* and *imitation*, the "ſame as the *Epic* and *Dramatic* kinds. They were "either real dialogues, or recitals of ſuch perſonated "diſcourſes; where the perſons themſelves had their "characters preſerved throughout; their manners, "humours, and diſtinct turns of temper and under-"ſtanding maintained, according to the moſt exact "poetical truth. 'Twas not enough, that theſe "pieces treated fundamentally of morals, and, in "conſequence, pointed out real characters and man-"ners: They exhibited them alive, and ſet the coun-"tenances and complexions of men plainly in view. "And by this means they not only taught us to know "others; but, what was principal and of higheſt vir-"tue in them, they taught us to know ourſelves." Thus far then theſe models are of unqueſtioned uſe to writers of every denomination. I forbear to mention, what this noble author finds occaſion frequently to inſinuate, and, by his own practice, labours to recommend,

commend, the ſuperior excellency of the *manner*, as well as *matter*, of theſe highly-rated originals. Not that I preſume to think them unworthy of imitation. But the public taſte, as appears, is running full faſt that way, inſomuch that ſome may even doubt, if the ſtate of literary compoſition be more endangered by the neglect, or vicious imitation, of the ancients. The graces of the Platonic manner, when ſparingly employed by a real genius, for the embelliſhment of ſtrong ſenſe, have, it muſt be owned, great beauty. But when this humour of *platonizing*, ſeizes on ſome minuter ſpirit, bent on ennobling a trivial matter, and all over-run with academic delicacy and affectation, nothing, to a juſt and manly reliſh, can be more diſguſting. One muſt wink hard not to ſee frequent examples of this, in the maſter Platoniſt himſelf. But his mimics, of late, have gone much farther. There is no need, in ſuch a croud of inſtances, to point to particulars. What I would rather obſerve is, that this folly, offenſive as it is, may perhaps admit of ſome excuſe from the *preſent ſtate of our literature*, and *the character of the great original himſelf*, whom theſe writers aſpire to imitate. When a language, as ours at this time, hath been much poliſhed and enriched with perfect models of ſtyle in almoſt every way, it is in the order of things, that the next ſtep ſhould be to a *vicious affectation*. For the ſimplicity of true taſte, under theſe circumſtances, grows inſipid. Something *better than the beſt* muſt be aimed at; and the reader's languid appetite raiſed by the provocatives

vocatives of an ambitious refinement. And this in *ſentiment*, as well as *language*. Whence we ſee how it happened that, even in *Greece* itſelf, where compoſition was ſtudied with a more than common accuracy, *Philoſophy*, when it paſſed out of the hands of its great maſters, degenerated by degrees into the ſubtilties of ſophiſtry, as did *Eloquence*, likewiſe, into the tricks of rhetoric.

But there was ſomething, as I hinted, too, in the *character of the writer imitated*, of a very tickliſh and dangerous nature; and of which our tribe of imitators were not ſufficiently aware. A very exact critic of antiquity hath told us what it was. It lay in Plato's *bringing the tumor of poetic compoſition into diſcourſes of philoſophy*, ΟΤΙ ΤΟΝ ΟΓΚΟΝ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΙΗΤΙΚΗΣ ΚΑΤΑΣΚΕΥΗΣ ΕΠΙ ΛΟΓΟΥΣ ΗΓΑΓΕ ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΟΥΣ[a]. And though the experiment, for the moſt part, ſucceeded not amiſs (as what contradiction is there which ſuperior genius cannot reconcile?) yet it ſometimes failed even in his hands. And as a French writer well expreſſes it, LE DIVIN *Plato, pour avoir voulu s'elever trop au deſſus des hommes, eſt ſouvent tombé dans un* GALIMATIAS *pompeux que quelques uns confondent avec le* SUBLIME. The PHAEDRUS, tho' the moſt remarkable, is not the only example of ſuch miſchance in the writings of this great man.

[a] DIONYS. HALICARN. EP. AD C. POMP. p. 205. *Edit. Hudſ.*

317. VE-

317. VERAS HINC DUCERE VOCES.] *Truth*, in poetry, means ſuch an expreſſion, as conforms to the general nature of things; *falſhood*, that, which however ſuitable to the particular inſtance in view, doth yet not correſpond to ſuch *general nature*. To attain to this *truth* of expreſſion in dramatic poetry two things are preſcribed: 1. A diligent ſtudy of the Socratic philoſophy; and 2. A maſterly knowledge and comprehenſion of human life. The *firſt*, becauſe it is the peculiar diſtinction of this ſchool *ad veritatem vitæ propius accedere* [Cic. de Or. i. 51.] And the *latter*, as rendering the imitation more univerſally ſtriking. This will be underſtood by reflecting that *truth* may be followed too cloſely in works of imitation, as is evident in two reſpects. For, 1. the artiſt, when he would give a Copy of nature, may confine himſelf too ſcrupulouſly to the exhibition of *particulars*, and ſo fail of repreſenting the general idea of the *kind*. Or, 2. in applying himſelf to give the *general* idea, he may collect it from an enlarged view of *real* life, whereas it were ſtill better taken from the nobler conception of it as ſubſiſting only in the *mind*. This laſt is the kind of cenſure we paſs upon the *Flemiſh* ſchool of painting, which takes its model from real nature, and not, as the *Italian*, from the contemplative idea of beauty [b]. The *former* cor-

[b] In conformity with the *Antique*. *Nec enim Phidias, cum faceret Jovis formam aut Minervæ, contemplabatur aliquem e quo ſimilitudinem duceret: ſed ipſius in mente inci-*

reſponds

reſponds to that other fault objected alſo to the Flemiſh maſters, which conſiſts in their copying from particular odd and groteſque nature in contradiſtinction to general and graceful nature.

We ſee then that in deviating from particular and partial, the poet more faithfully imitates *univerſal*, truth. And thus an anſwer occurs to that refined argument, which Plato invented and urged, with much ſeeming complacency, againſt poetry. It is, that *poetical imitation is at a great diſtance from truth.* "Poetical expreſſion, ſays the philoſopher, is the copy of the poet's own conceptions, the poet's conceptions of things, and things of the ſtanding archetype, as exiſting in the divine mind. Thus the poet's expreſſion, is a copy at third hand, from the primary, original truth." [Plat. De rep. L. x.] Now the diligent ſtudy of this rule of the poet obviates this reaſoning at once. For, by abſtracting from exiſtences all that peculiarly reſpects and diſcriminates the *individual*, the poet's conception, as it were neglecting the intermediate particular objects, catches, as far as may be, and reflects the divine archetypal idea, and ſo becomes itſelf the copy or image of truth. Hence too we are taught the force of that unuſual encomium on poetry by the great critic, *that it is ſomething more ſevere and philoſophical than hiſtory,*

debat ſpecies pulchritudinis eximia quædam, *quam intuens in eaque defixus ad illius ſimilitudinem artem et manum dirigebat* [Cic. Orat. 2.]

φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον ποίησις ἱστορίας ἐστίν. The reaſon follows, which is now very intelligible; ἡ μὲν γὰρ ποίησις μᾶλλον τὰ καθόλου, ἡ δ' ἱστορία τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον λέγει. [περ. ποιητ. κ. θ.] And this will further explain an eſſential difference, as we are told, between the two great rivals of the Greek ſtage. Sophocles, in return to ſuch as objected a want of truth in his characters, uſed to plead, *that he drew men ſuch as they ought to be, Euripides ſuch as they were.* Σοφοκλῆς ἔφη, αὐτὸς μὲν οἵους δεῖ ποιεῖν, Εὐριπίδης δὲ οἷοί εἰσι. [Περ. ποιητ. κ. κε.] The meaning of which is, Sophocles, from his more extended commerce with mankind, had enlarged and widened the narrow, partial conception, ariſing from the contemplation of *particular* characters, into a complete comprehenſion of the *kind.* Whereas the philoſophic Euripides, having been moſtly converſant in the academy, when he came to look abroad into life, keeping his eye too intent on ſingle, really exiſting perſonages, ſunk the *kind* in the *individual*; and ſo painted his characters naturally indeed, and *truly*, with regard to the objects in view, but ſometimes without that general and univerſally ſtriking likeneſs, which is demanded to the full exhibition of poetical truth.

But here an objection meets us, which muſt not be overlooked. It will be ſaid, "that philoſophic ſpeculations are more likely to render men's views *abſtract* and *general* than to confine them to *individuals.*

duals. This latter is a fault ariſing from the *ſmall number* of objects men happen to contemplate: and may be removed not only by taking a view of many *particulars*, which is knowledge of the world; but alſo by reflecting on the *general nature* of men, as it appears in good books of morality. For the writers of ſuch books form their *general* notion of human nature from an extenſive experience (either their own, or that of others) without which their writings are of no value." The anſwer, I think, is this. *By reflecting on the general nature of man* the philoſopher learns, what is the tenor of action ariſing from the predominancy of certain qualities or properties: *i. e.* in general, what that conduct is, which the imputed character requires. But to perceive clearly and certainly, how far, and with what degree of ſtrength this or that character will, on particular occaſions, moſt probably ſhew itſelf, this is the fruit only of a knowledge of the world. Inſtances of a want of this knowledge cannot be ſuppoſed frequent in ſuch a writer, as Euripides; nor, when they occur, ſo glaring, as to ſtrike a common reader. They are niceties, which can only be diſcerned by the true critic; and even to *him*, at this diſtance of time, from an ignorance of the Greek manners, that may poſſibly appear a fault, which is a real beauty. It would therefore be dangerous to think of pointing out the places, which Ariſtotle might believe liable to this cenſure in Euripides. I will however preſume to mention one,

which, if not juſtly critized, will, at leaſt, ſerve to illuſtrate my meaning.

The ſtory of his *Electra* is well known. The poet had to paint, in the character of this princeſs, a virtuous, but fierce, reſentful woman; ſtung by a ſenſe of perſonal ill treatment; and inſtigated to the revenge of a father's death, by ſtill ſtronger motives. A diſpoſition of this warm temperament, it might be concluded by the philoſopher in his cloſet, would be prompt to ſhew itſelf. *Electra* would, on any proper occaſion, be ready to avow her reſentment, as well as to forward the execution of her purpoſe. But to what lengths would this *reſentment* go? *i. e.* what degree of fierceneſs might *Electra* expreſs, without affording occaſion to a perſon widely ſkilled in mankind, and the operation of the paſſions, to ſay, "this is improbable?" Here abſtract theories will be of little ſervice. Even a moderate acquaintance with real life will be unable to direct us. Many individuals may have fallen under obſervation, that will juſtify the poet in carrying the expreſſion of ſuch a *reſentment* to any extreme. Hiſtory would, perhaps, furniſh examples, in which a virtuous reſentment hath been carried even farther than is here repreſented by the poet. What way then of determining the preciſe bounds and limits of it? Only by obſerving in numerous inſtances, *i. e.* from a large extenſive knowledge of practical life, how far it uſually, in ſuch characters, and under ſuch circumſtances, prevails. Hence a difference of repreſentation will

will ariſe in proportion to the extent of that *knowledge*. Let us now ſee, how the character before us, hath, in fact, been managed by Euripides.

In that fine ſcene, which paſſes between Electra and Oreſtes, whom as yet ſhe ſuſpects not to be her brother, the converſation very naturally turns upon Electra's diſtreſſes, and the author of them, Clytæmneſtra, as well as on her hopes of deliverance from them by the means of Oreſtes. The dialogue upon this proceeds:

Or. What then of Oreſtes, were he to return to this Argos?

El. Ah! wherefore that queſtion, when there is no proſpect of his return at all?

Or. But ſuppoſing he ſhould return, how would he go about to revenge the death of his father?

El. In the ſame way, in which that father ſuffered from the daring attempts of his enemies.

Or. And could you then dare to undertake with him the murder of your mother?

El. Yes, with that very ſteel, with which ſhe murdered my father.

Or. And am I at liberty to relate this to your brother, as your fixed reſolution?

El. I deſire only to live, till I have murdered my mother. The Greek is ſtill ſtronger:

May I die, as ſoon as I have murdered my mother!

Now that this laſt ſentence is abſolutely unnatural, will not be pretended. There have been doubtleſs

many examples, under the like circumſtances, of an expreſſion of revenge carried thus far. Yet, I think, we can hardly help being a little ſhocked at the fierceneſs of *this* expreſſion. At leaſt *Sophocles* has not thought fit to carry it to that extreme. In him, *Electra* contents herſelf with ſaying to *Oreſtes*, on a ſimilar occaſion:

"The conduct of this affair now reſts upon you. "Only let me obſerve this to you, that had I been "left alone, I would not have failed in one of theſe "two purpoſes, either to deliver myſelf gloriouſly, "or to periſh gloriouſly."

Whether this repreſentation of Sophocles be not more agreeable to *truth*, as collected from wide obſervation, *i. e.* from human nature at large, than that of Euripides, the capable reader will judge. If it be the reaſon I ſuppoſe to have been, *that Sophocles painted his characters, ſuch, as, from attending to numerous inſtances of the ſame kind, he would conclude they ought to be; Euripides, ſuch, as a narrower ſphere of obſervation had perſuaded him they were.*

319. INTERDUM SPECIOSA LOCIS, &c.] The poet's ſcience in *ethics* will principally ſhew itſelf in theſe two ways, 1. in furniſhing proper matter for general reflexion on human life and conduct; and, 2. in a due adjuſtment of the manners. By the former of theſe two applications of moral knowledge a play becomes, what the poet calls, *ſpecioſa locis*, i. e.

(for

(for the term is borrowed from the rhetoricians) *ſtriking in its moral topics:* a merit of the higheſt importance on the ancient ſtage, and which, if prudently employed in ſubſerviency to the *latter* more eſſential requiſite of the drama, *a juſt expreſſion of the manners*, will deſerve to be ſo reputed at all times, and on every theatre. The danger is, leſt a ſtudied, declamatory *moral*, affectedly introduced, or indulged to exceſs, ſhould prejudice the natural exhibition of the *characters*, and ſo convert *the image of human life* into an unaffecting, philoſophical dialogue.

319. MORATAQUE RECTE FABULA, &c.] This judgment of the poet, in regard of the ſuperior efficacy of *manners*, is generally thought to be contradicted by Ariſtotle; who in treating this ſubject, obſerves, "that let a piece he never ſo perfect in the *manners*, "*ſentiments*, and *ſtyle*, it will not ſo well anſwer the "end and purpoſe of tragedy, as if defective in theſe, "and finiſhed only in the fable and compoſition." Ἐάν τις ἐφεξῆς θῇ ῥήσεις ἠθικὰς καὶ λέξεις καὶ διανοίας εὖ πεποιημένας, ἀ ποιήσει ὃ ἦν τῆς τραγῳδίας ἔργον, ἀλλὰ πολὺ μᾶλλον ἡ καταδεεστέρως τούτοις κεχρημένη τραγῳδία, ἔχουσα δὲ μῦθον καὶ σύστασιν πραγμάτων. Κεφ. 5. M. Dacier thinks to clear this matter by ſaying, "that what Ariſtotle remarks holds "true of tragedy, but not of comedy, of which alone "Horace is here ſpeaking." But granting that the artificial contexture of the fable is leſs neceſſary to

the perfection of comedy, than of tragedy, yet, the tenor of this whole diviſion, exhorting to correctneſs in general, makes it unqueſtionable, that Horace muſt intend to include *both*. The caſe, as it ſeems to me, is this. The poet is not comparing the reſpective importance of the *fable* and *manners*, but of the *manners* and *diction*, under this word including alſo *numbers*. He gives them the preference *not* to a *good plot*, nor even to *fine ſentiments*, but to *verſus inopes rerum nugæque canoræ*. The *art* he ſpeaks of, is the art of *expreſſing* the thoughts properly, gracefully, and harmoniouſly: the *pondus* is the force and energy of good *verſification*. *Venus* is a general term including both kinds of beauty. *Fabula* does not mean the *fable* (in diſtinction from the reſt) but ſimply *a play*.

323. GRAIIS INGENIUM, &c.] The Greeks being eminent for *philoſophy*, eſpecially *morals*; the laſt obſervation naturally gives riſe to this. For the tranſition is eaſy from their ſuperiority, as philoſophers, to their ſuperiority as poets; and the more eaſy, as the latter is ſhewn to be, in part, the effect of the former. Now this ſuperiority of the Greeks in genius and eloquence (which would immediately occur, on mentioning the *Socraticæ chartæ*) being ſeen and confeſſed, we are led to aſk, "whence this ariſes." The anſwer is, from their making *glory*, not *gain*, the object of their wiſhes.

330. AERUGO

330. AERUGO ET CURA PECULI CUM SEMEL IMBUERIT, &c.] This *love of gain*, to which Horace imputes the imperfect ſtate of the Roman poetry, hath been uniformly aſſigned, by the wiſdom of antient times, as the ſpecific bane of arts and letters. *Longinus* and *Quintilian* account, from hence, for the decay of eloquence, *Galen* of phyſic, *Petronius* of painting, and *Pliny*, of the whole circle of the liberal arts. An ingenious modern is indeed for carrying his views much further. He, it ſeems, would account [Reſl. ſur la Poeſ. & ſur la Peint. v. ii. § xiv.] for this *public degeneracy* of taſte and literature, not from the malignity of the ſelfiſh paſſions, but the baleful influences of the air, emulating, I ſuppoſe, herein, the wiſdom of that philoſophy, which teaches to lay the *private degeneracy* of individuals on the ſtars. Thus much however may be true, that other cauſes have generally co-operated with it. Some of theſe, as might be ſhewn, did not eſcape the attention of theſe wiſe antients. Yet they did right to inſiſt chiefly on *this*, which is every way equal to the effect, aſcribed to it. It is ſo in its *nature*: For being, as Longinus calls it, νόσημα μικροπρεπὲς, *a diſeaſe which narrows and contracts the ſoul*, it muſt, of courſe, reſtrain the generous efforts and expanſions of genius; cramp the free powers and energies of the mind, and render it unapt to open itſelf to wide views, and to the projection of great, extenſive deſigns. It is ſo in its *conſequences*.

ſequences. For, as one ſays elegantly, *when the paſſion of avarice grows general in a country, the temples of Honour are ſoon pulled down, and all men's ſacrifices are made to Fortune*[a]. Thus extinguiſhing the ſenſe of honour, that divineſt movement in our frame, and the only one, which can invigorate the mind under the long labours of invention, it muſt needs be, that the fire and high ſpirit of genius go out with it; and dragging in its train the *love of pleaſure*, that unmanlieſt of all the paſſions, it diffuſes ſuch a languor and impotency over the mind, as muſt leave it at length a prey to a ſupine and waſting indolence; till, as Longinus obſerves of his own age, (and let every friend to letters deprecate the omen) Πάντες ἐγκαλαθεύδομεν, ὐκ ἄλλως πονηροὶ, ἢ ἀναλαμβάνοντες, εἰ μὴ ἐπαίνου, ἢ ἡδονῆς ἕνεκα, ἀλλὰ μὴ τῆς ζήλου ἢ τιμῆς ἀξίας ποτὲ ὠφελείας.

333. AUT PRODESSE VOLUNT, AUT DELECTARE POETAE, &c.] Though theſe lines have the appearance of general criticiſm, yet do they more eſpecially reſpect the dramatic poeſy. This will be evident from attending to the context. The full boaſt and glory of the drama is to *delight* and *inſtruct* mankind. 1. The latter praiſe was more eſpecially due to the antient tragic muſe, who did not think it ſufficient to paint lovely pourtraitures of *public* and *ſocial* virtue, and to call in the moralizing chorus to her aſſiſtance, but, which was one of her diſcriminat-

[a] Sir *William Temple.*

ing

ing characters, ſhe was perpetually inculcating every branch of true moral in thoſe brief ſententious precepts, which inform and ſolemnize her page. To theſe precepts then the poet manifeſtly refers in thoſe lines,

Quicquid præcipies, eſto brevis: ut cito dicta,
Percipiant animi dociles, teneantque fideles.

But what follows is ſtill clearer, [2.] The other end of the drama is to *entertain*, and this by the means of *probable fiction.*

Ficta, voluptatis cauſa, ſint proxima veris.

And the poet applies this to the caſe of the drama in expreſs words:

Ne quodcunque volet, poſcat ſibi fabula credi:
Neu pranſæ Lamiæ vivum puerum extrahat alvo.

The inſtance of *Lamia*, as Mr. Dacier obſerves, is certainly taken from ſome poet of that time, who had been guilty of this miſconduct. The reader may learn from hence, how intently Horace purſues his deſign of criticizing the *Roman ſtage*, when, in treating a ſubject, from its nature, the moſt general of any in the epiſtle, *viz. critical correctneſs*, we yet find him ſo induſtriouſly recurring to this point.

343. MISCUIT UTILE DULCI. The unnatural ſeparation of the DULCE ET UTILE hath done almoſt as much hurt in *letters* as that of the HONESTUM AND

AND UTILE, which Tully ſomewhere complains of, hath done in *morals*. For while the polite writer, as he is called, contents himſelf with the *former* of theſe qualities, and the man of erudition with the *latter*, it comes to paſs, as the ſame writer expreſſes it, that ET DOCTIS ELOQUENTIA POPULARIS, ET DISERTIS ELEGANS DOCTRINA DESIT [Orat. iii.]

363. HAEC AMAT OBSCURUM, VOLET HAEC SUB LUCE VIDERI.] Cicero hath given the ſame precept in relation to oratory, *habeat illa in dicendo admiratio ac ſumma laus umbram aliquam et receſſum, quo magis id, quod erit illuminatum, extare atque eminere videatur.* [De orat. L. iii. c. xxvi.]

373. MEDIOCRIBUS ESSE POETIS NON HOMINES, &c.] This judgment, however ſevere it may ſeem, is according to the practice of the beſt critics. We have a remarkable inſtance in the caſe of *Apollonius Rhodius*, who, though in the judgment of Quinctilian, the author of a no contemptible poem, yet on account of that *equal mediocrity*, which every where prevails in him, was ſtruck out of the liſt of good writers by ſuch ſovereign judges of poetical merit, as Ariſtophanes and Ariſtarchus [Quinct. L. x. c. 1.]

403. DICTAE PER CARMINA SORTES,] The oracles here ſpoken of, are ſuch as reſpect not *private perſons* (whom a natural curioſity, quickened by anxious ſuperſtition, has ever prompted to pry into their

their future fortunes) but *entire communities*; and for theſe there was little place, till Ambition had inſpired great and eventful deſigns, and by involving the fate of nations, had rendered the knowledge of futurity *important*. Hence, in marking the progreſs of antient poeſy, Horace judiciouſly poſtpones *oracles*, to the *celebration* of martial *proweſs*, as being that, which gave the principal *eclat* to them. This ſpecies of poetry then is rightly placed, tho' it be true, as the commentators have objected, that oracles were much antienter than Homer, and the Trojan war.

404. ET VITAE MONSTRATA VIA EST;] Meaning the writings of *Theognis*, *Phocylides*, *Heſiod*, and others, which, conſiſting wholly of moral precepts, are elegantly ſaid to lay open, or diſcover *the road of life*. Mr. Dacier's interpretation, which makes the poet mean *phyſics* by *viam vitæ*, is ſupported by no reaſon. *Il ne faut pas*, ſays he, *entendre ceci de la philoſophie et des mœurs*; CAR *Horace ſe contrediroit, puiſque il a dit que ce fut le premier ſoin de la poeſie*. The learned critic did not conſider, that the firſt care of poeſy, as explained above, and as employed by *Orpheus* and *Amphion*, was to inculcate *policy*, not *moral*.

404. ET GRATIA REGUM, PIERIIS TENTATA MODIS, LUDUSQUE REPERTUS ET LONGORUM OPERUM FINIS: NE FORTE PUDORI SIT TIBI MUSA LYRAE SOLERS, ET CANTOR APOLLO.] This is one of thoſe maſter-ſtrokes, which make the ſovereign

ſovereign charm of this poet. But the way, in which it hath been underſtood, extinguiſhes all its grace and beauty. *On les vers employa*, ſays an interpreter, who ſpeaks the ſenſe of the reſt, *à gagner la faveur des rois, & on les mit de tous les jeux & de tous les ſpectacles, qu'on inventa pour ſe delaſſer de ſes longs travaux & de toutes ſes fatigues. Je vous dis cela afin que vous n'ayez point de honte de faire la cour aux Muſes & à Apollon.* And, leſt this ſhould not ſeem explicit enough, he adds in a couple of notes, that by *ludus repertus*, &c. *il* [le poete] *veut parler des tragedies & des comedies que l'on faiſoit jouer dans les fêtes ſolemnelles.* And then, as to the *ne forte pudori*, *Cela prouve qu' Horace ne fait cét eloge de la poeſie que pour empecher que Piſon n'en fût degouté.* Can any thing be more inſipid? For could the poet think ſo meanly of his art, as to believe it wanted an apology? Or had the *courtier* ſo little addreſs, as to direct that apology immediately to the Piſo's? Beſides, what ſpecies of poeſy is it, that he labours to excuſe? Why, according to this interpretation, the *dramatic:* the ſupreme boaſt of his art, and the main ſubject of the epiſtle. And in what *manner* does he excuſe it? Why, in recommending it, as an agreeable amuſement. But his maſter, Ariſtotle, would have furniſhed him with a nobler plea: and 'tis certain, the antients talked at another rate of the uſe and end of the drama. Let us ſee then, if the ſenſe, given in the commentary, will bring any relief to the poet. In fact, this whole paſſage [from *et vitæ*, &c. to

cantor

cantor Apollo] obliquely glances at the two ſorts of poetry, peculiarly cultivated by himſelf, and is an indirect apology for his own choice of them. For 1. *vitæ monſtrata via eſt* is the character of his *ſermones*. And 2. all the reſt, of his *Odes*. Theſe are recommended, agreeably to their nature, 1. as of uſe to *conciliate the favour of princes*; hereby glancing at the ſucceſs of his own odes, and, with the happieſt addreſs, inſinuating the regard, which Auguſtus paid to letters. 2. As contributing to the mirth and entertainment of feaſts, and eſpecially as holding a principal place in the celebration of thoſe more ſacred, ſecular feſtivities *(longorum operum finem)* which could not be duly ſolemnized, without the miniſtration of the lyric muſe.

Caſtis cum pueris ignara puella mariti,
Diſceret unde preces, vatem ni muſa dediſſet?
2 Ep. i. 132.

And again: *ego Diis amicum*
Sæculo feſtas referente luces
Reddidi carmen, docilis modorum
Vatis Horati. Carm. ſec.

In another place both ends are expreſſed:

teſtudo
Divitum MENSIS *& amica* TEMPLIS. 3 O. xi.

Where it may be obſerved, this double character of lyric poetry exactly correſponds to that, which the poet

poet had before expreſsly given of it in this very epiſtle: the *gratia regum* being the ſame as

Muſa dedit fidibus Divos puerosque Deorum
Et pugilem victorem & equum certamine primum. ℣ 83.

And *luduſque repertus*, deſcribing its other office,

Et juvenum curas & libera vina referre. ib.

In this view the following line, which apologizes, not for poeſy in general, or its nobleſt ſpecies, the drama, but for his own lyrics only, hath, as the reader perceives, infinite grace; and is peculiarly marked with that vein of exquiſite humour and pleaſantry, ſo ſuited to the genius of the epiſtle, and which makes one of the diſtinguiſhing beauties of the poet. It hath alſo an extreme *propriety*; the levity of the ode admitting, or rather requiring, ſome apology to the Piſo's; who would be naturally led to think but meanly of it, in compariſon of the ſublimer dramatic poetry. I muſt add, the very terms of the apology ſo expreſsly define and characterize lyric poetry, that it is ſomething ſtrange, it ſhould have eſcaped vulgar notice: *muſa lyræ ſolers* being evidently explained by *Romanæ fidicen lyræ* [4 O. iii. 23.] and the epithet *cantor*, deſcribing Apollo, as plainly as words can do it, in the peculiar character of *Lyric*.

407. CANTOR APOLLO. NATURA FIERET, &c.] The tranſition is delicate, and a fine inſtance of that kind of method, which the Epiſtle demands. The poet had juſt been ſpeaking of the ode, and its in-

ſpirer, *cantor Apollo*; and this, in the natural train of his ideas, ſuggeſted that enthuſiaſm, and ſtretch of genius, which is at once the characteriſtic and glory of the lyric compoſition. And this was ground enough, in an Epiſtle, to paſs on to ſay ſomething concerning the power and influence of genius in poetry in general. It was for want of attending to ſo plain a reflection, as this, that the excellent Heinſius trifled ſo egregiouſly, in his tranſpoſitions of the Epiſtles, and in particular of this very place. And the haſty cenſures, which Mr. Dacier paſſed on the poet's method, are apparently owing to no other cauſe [See his introduct. remarks.] But to declare my ſenſe at parting, of the *latter* of theſe critics, I would ſay, as he himſelf does of the former, *C'eſt aſſez parlé contre M.* DACIER, *dont j'eſtime & admire autant la profonde érudition, que je condamne la mauvais uſage qu'il en a fait en quelques rencontres.*

408. NATURA FIERET LAUDABILE CARMEN AN ARTE.] It will be curious to obſerve, what perpetual matter of debate this queſtion hath furniſhed to the antient learned.

It ſeems firſt to have taken its riſe from the high pretenſion of poets to inſpiration, [ſee Pind. Od. iii. Nem.] which was afterwards underſtood in too literal a ſenſe, and in time extended to all works of genius or imitation. The orator, who, as Cicero tells us, is *near a-kin to the poet*, ſet up the ſame claim; principally, as it ſhould ſeem, on the authority of Socrates,

who taking occaſion from the ill uſe that had been made of *rhetoric*, to decry it, as an *art*, was herein followed by the moſt illuſtrious of his ſcholars, amongſt whom was Ariſtotle, [Quinct. L. ii. c. 17.] who had written a ſet treatiſe profeſſedly with this view, though his books of rhetoric proceed on very different principles. The queſtion afterwards appeared of ſo much moment to Cicero, that he diſcuſſed it in form, in one of his dialogues De oratore. And Quinctilian, in ſtill later times, found himſelf obliged to reſume the ſame debate, and hath accordingly conſidered it in an entire chapter.

The long continuance of ſo frivolous a diſpute, and which admits ſo eaſy a deciſion, would go near to perſuade one, if, as Shakeſpeare ſpeaks, *they had not the privilege of antiquity upon them*, that the pens of the antient *literati* were not always more wiſely employed, than thoſe of modern controverſialiſts. If we aſk the reaſon, it would ſeem to be owing to that ambitious ſpirit of ſubtlety and refinement, which, as Quinctilian obſerves, *puts men upon teaching not what they believe to be true, but what, from the falſehood or apparent ſtrangeneſs of the matter, they expect the praiſe of ingenuity from being able to maintain.* This, I ſay, might ſeem to be the cauſe of ſo much perverſity, on the firſt view, and unqueſtionably it had its influence. But the truth is, the real cauſe was ſomething more general and extenſive. It was, in fact, that *natural proneneſs*, ſo Longinus terms it,

in

in mankind, to cenſure and degrade things preſent, ἴδιον ἀνθρώπῳ καταμέμφεσθαι τὰ παρόντα. This in nothing holds truer, than in what concerns the ſtate of literature; as may be ſeen from that unwearied induſtry of the learned to decry whatever appears to be the prevailing taſte of the times; whether it be in ſuggeſting ſome defect to be made good by future improvements; or, as is more common, becauſe the eaſier and leſs invidious taſk, in ſetting up, and magnifying ſome former examples of a different caſt and merit. Thus, in the caſe before us, exquiſite art and commanding genius, being the two only means of riſing to ſuperior literary excellence, in proportion as any age became noted for the one, it was conſtantly defamed, and the preference given to the other. So, during the growth of letters in any ſtate, when a ſublimity of ſentiment and ſtrength of expreſſion, make, as, under thoſe circumſtances, they always will, the characteriſtic of the times, the critic, diſguſted with the rude workings of nature, affects to admire only the nicer finiſhings and proportions of art. When, let but the growing experience of a few years refine and perfect the public taſte, and what was before traduced as roughneſs and barbarity, becomes at once nerves, dignity, and force. Then art, is effeminacy; and judgment, want of ſpirit. All now is rapture and inſpiration. The exacteſt modern compoſitions are unmanly and unnatural, *et ſolos veteres legendos putant, neque in ullis aliis eſſe naturalem eloquentiam et robur viris dignum arbitrantur* [Quinct. L. x. c. 1.]

The truth of this obſervation might be juſtified from many examples. The learning and art of *Pacuvius* (for ſo I underſtand the epithet *doctus*) carried it before the ſublime of *Accius*; juſt as in elder Greece the ſmooth and correct *Simonides*, *tenuis Simonides*, as Quinctilian characteriſes him, bore away the prize from the lofty, and high-ſpirited *Æſchylus*. Afterwards indeed the caſe was altered. The Athenians, grown exact in the rules of good writing, became ſo enamoured of the bold flights of Æſchylus, as with a little correction to admit him on the ſtage, who, by this means, frequently gained the prize from a polite, and knowing people, for what had certainly loſt it him in the ſimpler, and leſs informed theatre of his own times. Thus too it fared with the elder Latin poets, who, though admired indeed in their own age, but with conſiderable abatement from the reaſon before aſſigned, were perfectly idolized in that of Auguſtus; ſo as to require the ſharpeſt ſatire of our poet, to corect the malevolent principle, from whence the affectation aroſe. But the obſervation holds of our own writers. There was a time, when the art of JOHNSON was ſet above the divineſt raptures of SHAKESPEARE. The preſent age is well convinced of the miſtake. And now the genius of SHAKESPEARE is idolized in its turn. Happily for the public taſte, it can ſcarcely be too much ſo. Yet, ſhould any, in the rage of erecting trophies to the genius of antient poeſy preſume to violate the recent honours of more cor-

rect

rect poets, the cauſe of ſuch critical perverſity will be ever the ſame. For all admiration of paſt times, when exceſſive, is ſtill to be accounted for the ſame way,

Ingeniis non ille favet plauditque ſepultis,
Noſtra ſed impugnat, nos noſtraque lividus odit.

410. ALTERIUS SIC ALTERA POSCIT OPEM RES ET CONJURAT AMICE.] This concluſion, "that art and nature muſt conſpire to the produc-"tion of a perfect piece" is, in the general, unqueſtionably juſt. If we would know the diſtinct powers and provinces of each, a fine paſſage in Longinus will inform us. For, of the five ſources of the ſublime, enumerated by that critic, two only "a grandeur of "conception, and the pathetic" come from *nature:* the reſt, "a juſt arrangement of figures," "a ſplen-"did diction" and "dignity of compoſition," are of the province of *art*. Yet, though their powers are thus diſtinct, each, in order to attain its due perfection, muſt conſpire, and be conſociated, with the other. For that "ſublime of conception" and "pa-"thetic enthuſiaſm" never make a more ſure and laſting impreſſion, than when cloathed in the graces, and moderated by the ſober ſenſe of *art:* as, on the contrary, the milder beauties of "language" and "artificial compoſition" are never ſo ſecure of ſeizing the attention, as when raiſed and inſpirited by the *pathos*, or *ſublime*. So that the nature of the union, here recommended, is ſuch, as makes it not only ne-

ceſſary to the completion of that great end, *viz.* the glory of perfect compoſition; but that either part, in the alliance may fully effect its own. All which is but the larger explication of another paſſage in Longinus, who teaches, that ΤΟΤΕ Η ΤΕΧΝΗ ΤΕΛΕΙΟΣ, ΗΝΙΚ' ΑΝ ΦΥΣΙΣ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΔΟΚΗΙ· Η Δ' ΑΥ ΦΥΣΙΣ ΕΠΙΤΥΧΗΣ, ΟΤΑΝ ΛΑΝΘΑΝΟΥΣΑ ΠΕΡΙΕΧΗΙ ΤΗΝ ΤΕΧΝΗΝ. [περ. υψ. τμη. κ.]

A DIS-

DISSERTATION

Concerning the

PROVINCES

Of the feveral

SPECIES *of the* DRAMA.

DESCRIPTAS SERVARE VICES OPERVMQUE COLORES
CVR EGO, SI NEQVEO IGNOROQVE, POETA SALVTOR?

HOR. ART. POET. ver. 86.


BRITISH MUSEUM

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A

DISSERTATION, &c.

I Have ſaid in the *introduction* to the *Epiſtle to the Piſos*, that the deſign of Horace was by no means to deliver a ſyſtem of criticiſm on poetry in *general*, nor even on dramatic poetry in *particular*, but ſimply to regulate the *Roman* ſtage. Accordingly in the notes on this work, I have confined myſelf to what I thought the main purpoſe of the poet: or, at moſt, have only intermixed ſome *occaſional* remarks, which the tenor of the poem naturally ſuggeſted to me. I was far from intending thoſe ſcattered obſervations for a complete *ſyſtem* of rules on dramatic poetry, which I willingly leave the reader to collect for himſelf, out of the numberleſs treatiſes on that ſubject. Or, if he would ſpare himſelf this trouble, he may perhaps find it ſufficient to peruſe *two* ſmall tracts, which, though by no means of equal authority, or indeed value, one may, nevertheleſs, venture to recommend together, as the completeſt eſſays of dramatic criticiſm. The *principal* of theſe I ſcarcely need tell the reader is the admirable POETICS of Ariſtotle; a work,

a work, which is now become acceſſible and familiar to every young ſtudent by the very learned and elaborate commentary of *M. Dacier*. The *other* is a far ſlighter thing [*a*] of an ingenious modern, but written with ſo much good ſenſe, and planned in ſo judicious a method, that it may well paſs for an uſeful ſupplement to the Greek critic.

Yet in reading theſe excellent works, and as many more of the moſt celebrated on the ſubject, as I could readily meet with, there was one point which I found omitted in them all, and which appeared to me of too much Importance to be paſſed over, in a complete inquiry into dramatic writing. For, though great pains had been taken to deduce the *general* laws of this poem, yet the provinces of its ſeveral *ſpecies*, I obſerved, had never been diſtinctly ſettled. And yet, 'till this was done with preciſion, it would be impoſſible, I thought to form an equitable judgment of the merits of any *particular drama*.

It is to ſupply this defect, that I have hazarded the following obſervations; in which, if I advance any thing that is not agreeable to the ſentiments of the more judicious reader, he will, at leaſt, forgive it on account of the novelty, and, I may even ſay, nicety of the ſubject.

THE PURPOSE of the DRAMA is, univerſally to "repreſent human life in the way of *action*.". But

[a] Called REFLECTIONS SUR LA POETIQUE, and to be found in Tom. iii. of M. DE FONTENELLE's works. *Par.* 1742.

as

as ſuch repreſentation is made for ſeparate and diſtinct ENDS, it is, further, diſtinguiſhed into different *ſpecies*, which we know by the names of TRAGEDY, COMEDY, and FARCE.

By *Tragedy*, then, I mean that ſpecies of dramatic repreſentation, whoſe *end* is "*to excite the paſſions of* PITY *and* TERROR, *and perhaps ſome others, nearly allied to them.*"

By *Comedy that*, which propoſeth, for the *end* of its repreſentation, "*the ſenſation of pleaſure ariſing from a view of the truth of* CHARACTERS, *more eſpecially their ſpecific differences.*"

By *Farce* I underſtand, that ſpecies of the drama, "*whoſe ſole aim and tendency is to excite* LAUGHTER."

The idea of theſe *three ſpecies* being then propoſed, let us now ſee, what concluſions may be drawn from it. And chiefly in reſpect of *Tragedy* and *Comedy*, which are moſt important. For as to what concerns the province of *Farce*, this will be eaſily underſtood, when the character of the other two is once ſettled.

CHAPTER I.

Of the provinces of Tragedy and Comedy.

FROM the idea of theſe two ſpecies, as given above, the following concluſions, about the *natures* of each, are immediately deducible.

1. If

1. If the proper end of TRAGEDY be to *affect*, it follows, "that *actions*, not characters, are the chief "object of its repreſentations." For that which *affects* us moſt in the view of human life is the obſervation of thoſe ſignal circumſtances of *felicity or diſtreſs*, which occur in the fortunes of men. But *felicity* and *diſtreſs*, as the great critic takes notice, depend on *action*; κατὰ τὰς πράξεις εὐδαίμονες, ἢ τυναντίον. They are then the calamitous *events*, or fortunate *ſucceſſes* in human action, which ſtir up the ſtronger *affections*, and agitate the heart with *paſſion*. The *manners* are not, indeed, to be neglected. But they become an inferior conſideration in the views of the tragic poet, and are exhibited only for the ſake of making the *action* more proper to intereſt us. Thus our *joy*, on the *happy cataſtrophe* of the fable, depends, in a good degree, on the *virtuous character* of the agent; as on the other hand, we ſympathize more ſtrongly with him, on a *diſtreſsful iſſue*. The *manners* of the ſeveral perſons in the drama muſt, alſo, be ſignified, that the *action*, which in many caſes will be determined by them, may appear to be carried on with *truth and probability*. Hence every thing paſſing before us, as we are accuſtomed to ſee it in real life, we enter more warmly into their intereſts, as forgetting, that we are attentive to a *fictitious ſcene*. And, beſides, from knowing the perſonal *good, or ill, qualities* of the agents, we learn to anticipate their future *felicity* or *miſery*, which gives increaſe to the *paſſion* in either caſe. Our acquaintance with IAGO's *cloſe villainy* makes

makes us tremble for Othello and Deſdemona beforehand: and HAMLET's *filial piety and intrepid daring* occaſion the audience ſecretly to exult in the *expectation* of ſome ſucceſsful vengeance to be inflicted on the inceſtuous murderers.

2. For the ſame reaſon as tragedy takes for its *object* the actions of men, it, alſo, prefers, or rather confines itſelf to, ſuch actions, as are moſt *important*. Which is only ſaying, that as it intends to *intereſt*, it, of courſe, chuſes the repreſentation of thoſe *events*, which are moſt *intereſting*.

And this ſhews the defect of modern tragedy, in turning ſo conſtantly as it does, on *love ſubjects*; the effect of this practice is, that, excepting only the rank of the actors (which indeed, as will be ſeen preſently, is of conſiderable importance) the reſt is below the dignity of this drama. For the *action* when ſtripped of its accidental ornaments and reduced to the *eſſential fact*, is nothing more then what might as well have paſſed in a cottage, as a king's palace. The Greek poets ſhould be our guides here, who take the very grandeſt events in their ſtory to ennoble their tragedy. Whence it comes to paſs that the *action*, having an eſſential dignity, is always *intereſting*, and by the ſimpleſt management of the poet becomes in a ſupreme degree, *pathetic*.

3. On the ſame account, the *perſons*, whoſe actions Tragedy would exhibit to us, muſt be of *principal rank and dignity*. For the actions of theſe are both in *themſelves*, and in their *conſequences* moſt fitted to excite

cite paſſion. The *diſtreſſes* of private and inferior perſonages will, no doubt, *affect* us greatly; and we may give the name of *tragedies*, if we pleaſe to dramatic repreſentations of them: as, in fact, we have ſeveral applauded pieces of this kind. Nay, it may ſeem, that the fortunes of private men, as more nearly reſembling *thoſe* of the generality, ſhould be moſt *affecting*. But this circumſtance, in no degree, makes amends for the loſs of other and much greater *advantages*. For, whatever be the *unhappy incidents* in the ſtory of private men, it is certain, they muſt take faſter hold of the *imagination*, and, of courſe, impreſs the heart more forcibly, when related of the higher characters in life. Kings, Heroes, Stateſmen, and other perſons of great and public authority influence by their *ill-fortune* the whole community, to which they belong. The attention is rouzed, and all our faculties take an alarm, at the apprehenſion of ſuch extenſive and important wretchedneſs. And, beſides, if we regard the *event* itſelf, without an eye to its *effects*, there is ſtill the wideſt difference between the two caſes. Thoſe ideas of awe and veneration, which opinion throws round the perſons of princes, make us eſteem the very *ſame event* in their fortunes, as more auguſt and emphatical, than in the fortunes of private men. In the *one*, it is ordinary and familiar to our conceptions; it is ſingular and ſurprizing, in the *other*. The fall of a *cottage*, by the accidents of time and weather, is almoſt unheeded; while the ruin of a *tower*, which the neighbourhood hath

hath gazed at, for ages, with admiration, ſtrikes all obſervers with concern. So that if we chuſe to continue the abſurdity, taken notice of in the laſt article of planning *unimportant action* in our tragedy, we ſhould, at leaſt, take care to give it this foreign and extrinſic *importance* of great *actors*: Yet our paſſion for the *familiar* goes ſo far, that we have tragedies, not only of private action, but of *private perſons*; and ſo have well nigh annihilated the nobleſt of the two dramas amongſt us. On the whole it appears, that as the proper object of tragedy is *action*, ſo it is *important* action, and therefore more eſpecially the action of *great and illuſtrious men*. Each of theſe concluſions is the direct conſequence of our idea of its *end*.

The reverſe of all this holds true of COMEDY. For,

1. Comedy, by the very terms of the definition, is converſant about *characters*. And if we obſerve, that which creates the pleaſure we find in contemplating the lives of men, conſidered as diſtinct from the *intereſt* we take in their fortunes, is the contemplation of their manners and humours. Their *actions*, when they are not of that ſort, which ſeizes our admiration, or catches the affections, are no otherwiſe conſidered by us, than as they are ſenſible indications of the internal ſentiment and diſpoſition. Our intimate conſciouſneſs of the ſeveral turns and windings of our nature, makes us attend to theſe pictures of human life with an incredible curioſity. And herein the proper entertainment, which comic repreſentation, *as ſuch*, adminiſters to the mind, conſiſts. By

turning the thought on *event and action*, this entertainment is proportionably leſſened; that is, the *end* of comedy is leſs perfectly attained [b].

But here, again, though *action* be not the main object of comedy, yet it is not to be neglected, any more than *character* in tragedy, but comes in as an uſeful acceſſary, or aſſiſtant to it. For the *manners of men* only ſhew themſelves, or ſhew themſelves moſt uſually, in *action*. It is this, which fetches out the latent ſtrokes of *character*, and renders the inward *temper and diſpoſition* the object of ſenſe. *Probable circumſtances* are then imagined, and a certain *train of action* contrived, to evidence the *internal qualities*. There is no *other*, or no *probable* way, but this, of bringing us acquainted with them. Again; by engaging his *characters* in a courſe of action and the purſuit of ſome *end*, the comic poet leaves them to expreſs themſelves undiſguiſedly, and *without deſign*; in which the eſſence of *humour* conſiſts.

[b] Ariſtotle was of the ſame mind, as appears from his definition of comedy, which ſays he, is ΜΙΜΗΣΙΣ ΦΑΥΛΟΤΕΡΩΝ; [κ. ε.] that is, *the imitation of characters*, whatever be the diſtinct meaning of the term φαυλότεροι. It is true, this critic, in his account of the origin of tragedy and comedy, makes them both the imitations of ACTIONS. Οἱ μὲν σεμνότεροι ΤΑΣ ΚΑΛΑΣ ἐμιμοῦντο ΠΡΑΞΕΙΣ, οἱ δὲ εὐτελέστεροι ΤΑΣ τῶν φαύλων. [κ. δ.] Yet, even here, the expreſſion is ſo put, as if he had been conſcious that *perſons*, not *actions*, were the direct object of comedy. And the quotation, now alledged from another place, where a definition is given more in form, ſhews, that this was, in effect, his ſentiment.

Add

Add to this, that when the *fable* is ſo contrived as to attach the mind, we very naturally fancy ourſelves preſent at a courſe of *living* action. And this illuſion quickens our attention to the *characters*, which no longer appear to us creatures of the poet's fiction, but actors in real life.

Theſe obſervations concerning the *moderated* uſe of action in comedy, inſtruct us what to think "of "thoſe intricate Spaniſh plots, which have been in "uſe, and have taken both with us and ſome French "writers for the ſtage. The truth is, they have "hindered very much the main end of comedy. For "when theſe unnatural plots are uſed, the mind is not "only entirely *drawn off* from the characters by thoſe "ſurprizing turns and revolutions; but characters "have no opportunity even of being *called out* and "diſplaying themſelves. For the actors of all cha-"racters, *ſucceed* and are *embarraſſed* alike, when the "inſtruments for carrying on deſigns are only *per-"plexed apartments*, *dark entries*, *diſguiſed habits*, and "*ladders of ropes*. The comic plot is, and muſt, "indeed, be carried on by *deceipt*. The Spaniſh "ſcene does it by deceiving the man *through his "ſenſes*: Terence and Moliere, by deceiving him "*through his paſſions and affections*. This is the "right method: for the character is *not* called out "under the *firſt* ſpecies of deceipt: under the *ſecond*, "the character does *all*."

2. As *character*, not *action*, is the object of comedy; ſo the *characters* it paints muſt not be of *ſin-*

gular and illuſtrious note, either for their *virtues* or *vices*. The reaſon is, that ſuch characters take too faſt hold of the *affections*, and ſo call off the mind from adverting to the *truth* of the manners; that is, from receiving the *pleaſure*, which this poem *intends*. Our *ſenſe of imitation* is that to which the comic poet addreſſes himſelf; but ſuch pictures of *eminent worth*, or *villainy* ſeize upon the *moral ſenſe*; and by raiſing the ſtrong correſpondent paſſions of *admiration* and *abhorrence*, turn us aſide from contemplating the *imitation itſelf*. And,

3. For a like cauſe, comedy confines its views to the characters of *private and inferior perſons*. For the *truth of character*, which is the ſpring of *humour*, being neceſſarily, as was obſerved, to be ſhewn through the medium of *action*, and the actions of the great being uſually ſuch as excite the *pathos*, it follows of courſe, that theſe cannot, with propriety, be made the actors in comedy. Perſons of high and public life, if they are drawn agreeably to our accuſtomed ideas of them, muſt be employed in ſuch a *courſe of action*, as arreſts the attention, or intereſts the paſſions; and either way it diverts the mind from obſerving the *truth* of manners, that is, it prevents the attainment of the ſpecific *end*, which comedy deſigns.

And if the reaſon, here given, be ſufficient to exclude the *higher characters* in life from this *drama*, even where the repreſentation is intended to be *ſerious*, we ſhall find it ſtill more improper to expoſe them in any

any pleaſant or ridiculous light. 'Tis true, the follies and foibles of the great will apparently take an eaſier ridicule by repreſentation, than thoſe of their inferiors. And this it was, which miſled the celebrated P. CORNEILLE into the opinion, *that the actions of the great, and even of kings themſelves, provided they be of the ridiculous kind, are as fit objects of comedy, as any other.* But he did not reflect, that the *actions* of the great being uſually ſuch, as intereſt the intire community, at leaſt ſcarcely any other falling beneath vulgar notice; and the higher *characters* being rarely ſeen or contemplated by the people but with reverence, hence it is, that in fact, *the repreſentation of high life* cannot, without offence to probability, be made *ridiculous*, or conſequently be admitted into comedy under this view. And therefore PLAUTUS, when he thought fit to introduce theſe *reverend perſonages* on the comic ſtage in his AMPHITRUO, though he employed them in no very ſerious matters, was yet obliged to apologize for this impropriety in calling his play a *Tragicomedy*. What he ſays upon the occaſion, though delivered with an air of pleaſantry, is according to the laws of juſt criticiſm.

Faciam ut commiſta ſit TRAGICOCOMOEDIA.
Nam me perpetuo facere, ut ſit Comoedia
REGES QUO VENIANT ET DII, *non par arbitror.*
Quid igitur? Quoniam hic SERVOS QUOQUE PARTES HABET,

Faciam ſit, proinde ut dixi, TRAGICOCOMOEDIA.

PROL. IN AMPHIT.

And now, taking the *idea* of the *two dramas*, as here opened, along with us, we ſhall be able to give an account of ſeveral attributes, *common* to both, or which further, *characteriſe* each of them. And,

1. *A plot will be required in both.* For the end of tragedy being to excite the affections *by* action, and the end of comedy, to manifeſt the truth of character *through* it, an artful *conſtitution of the Fable* is required to do juſtice both to the one and the other. It ſerves to bring out the *pathos* and to produce *humour*. And thus the general form or ſtructure of the two dramas will be one and the ſame.

2. More particularly, *an unity and even ſimplicity in the conduct of the fable* [c] *is a perfection in each.* For

[c] The neglect of this is one of the greateſt defects in the *modern drama*; which in nothing falls ſo much ſhort of the perfection of the Greek ſcene as in this want of ſimplicity in the conſtruction of its fable. The good ſenſe of the author of the *Hiſtory of the Italian Theatre* (who, though a mere player, appears to have had juſter notions of the drama, than the generality of even profeſſed critics) was ſenſibly ſtruck with this difference in *tragedy*. "Quant à l'unité d'action, ſays he, je trouve un grande "difference entre les tragedies Grecques & les tragedies "Françoiſes; j'apperçois toûjours aiſement l'action des "tragedies Grecques, & je ne la perds point de vûe; "mais dans les tragedies Françoiſes, j'avoüe, que j'ai "ſouvent bien de la peine à demêler l'action des epi-"ſodes, dont elle eſt chargée." [*Hiſt. du Theatre Italien, par* LOUIS RICCOBONI, p. 293. *Paris* 1728.]

the

the courſe of the *affections* is diverted and weakened by the intervention of what we call a *double plot*; and even by a multiplicity of *ſubordinate events*, though tending to a common *end*; and, of *perſons*, though all of them, ſome way, concerned in promoting it. The like conſideration ſhews the obſervance of this *rule* to be eſſential to juſt comedy. For when the *attention* is ſplit on ſo many interfering objects, we are not at leiſure to obſerve, nor do we ſo fully enter into, the *truth of repreſentation* in any of them; the *ſenſe* of *humour*, as of the *pathos*, depending very much on the continued and undiverted operation of its *object* upon us.

3. The two dramas agree, alſo, in this circumſtance; that the *manners* of the perſons exhibited ſhould be *imperfect*. An abſolutely *good*, or an abſolutely *bad*, character is foreign to the purpoſe of each. And the reaſon is, 1. That ſuch a repreſentation is *improbable*. And *probability* conſtitutes, as we have ſeen, the very eſſence of comedy; and is the *medium*, through which tragedy is enabled moſt powerfully to affect us. 2. Such *characters* are improper to *comedy*, becauſe, as was hinted above, they turn the attention aſide from contemplating the *expreſſion* of them, which we call *humour*. And they are not leſs unſuited to *tragedy*, becauſe though they make a forcible impreſſion on the mind, yet, as Ariſtotle well obſerves, they do not produce the paſſions of *pity and terror*; that is, their *impreſſions* are not of

the nature of that *pathos*, by which tragedy works its purpoſe. [κ. ιγ.]

There are, likewiſe, ſome peculiarities, which diſtinguiſh the two dramas. And

1. *Though a plot be neceſſary to produce* humour, *as well as the pathos, yet a* good plot *is not ſo eſſential to comedy, as tragedy.* For the pathos is the reſult of the *entire action*, that is, of all the circumſtances of the ſtory taken together, and conſpiring by a probable tendency, to a completion in the *event*. A failure in the juſt arrangement and diſpoſition of the parts may, then, affect what is of the eſſence of this drama. On the contrary, *humour*, though brought out by *action*, is not the effect of the *whole*, but may be diſtinctly evidenced in a *ſingle ſcene*; as may be eminently illuſtrated in the two comedies of Fletcher, called *The Little French Lawyer*, and *The Spaniſh Curate*. The nice contexture of the fable therefore, though it may give a *pleaſure* of another kind, is not ſo immediately required to the production of *that* pleaſure, which the nature of comedy demands. Much leſs is there occaſion for that labour and ingenuity of contrivance, which is ſeen in the intricacy of the Spaniſh fable. Yet this is the taſte of our comedy. Our writers are all for plot and intrigue; and never appear ſo well ſatisfied with themſelves as when, to ſpeak in their own phraſe, they contrive to have a great deal of *buſineſs* on their hands. Indeed they have reaſon. For it hides their inability to colour

manners

manners, which is the proper but much harder province of true comedy.

2. *Tragedy ſucceeds beſt, when the ſubject is* real; *comedy, when it is* feigned. What would this ſay, but that tragedy, turning our attention principally on the *action repreſented*, finds means to *intereſt* us more ſtrongly on the perſuaſion of its being taken from *actual life?* While comedy, on the other hand, can neglect theſe ſcrupulous meaſures of *probability*, as intent only on exhibiting *characters*; for which purpoſe an *invented ſtory* will ſerve much better. The reaſon is, *real action* does not ordinarily afford variety of incidents enough to ſhew the *character* fully: *feigned action* may. To illuſtrate this further, we may obſerve, that comedy makes all its characters *general*; tragedy, *particular*. The *avare* of Moliere is not ſo properly the picture of a *covetous man*, as of *covetouſneſs itſelf*. Racine's *Nero*, on the contrary, is not a picture of *cruelty*, but of a *cruel man*.

Yet here it will be proper to guard againſt two miſtakes, which the principles now delivered may be thought to countenance.

The *firſt* is with regard to *tragic* characters which I ſay are *particular*. My meaning is, they are *more* particular than thoſe of comedy. That is, the *end* of tragedy does not require or permit the poet to draw together ſo many of theſe characteriſtic circumſtances which ſhew the manners, as Comedy. For in the former of theſe dramas, no more of *character* is ſhewn, than what the courſe of the action neceſſarily calls forth.

Whereas

Whereas, all or moſt of the features, by which it is uſually diſtinguiſhed, are ſought out and induſtriouſly diſplayed in the *latter*.

The caſe is much the ſame as in *portrait painting*; where if a great maſter be required to draw a *particular face*, he gives the very lineaments he finds in it; yet ſo far reſembling to what he obſerves of the ſame turn in other faces, as not to affect any minute cirumſtance of peculiarity. But if the ſame artiſt were to deſign a *head* in general, he would aſſemble together all the cuſtomary traits and features, any where obſervable through the ſpecies, which ſhould beſt expreſs the idea, whatever it was, he had conceived in his own mind and wanted to exhibit in the picture.

There is much the ſame difference between the two ſorts of *dramatic* portraits. Whence it appears that in calling the tragic character *particular*, I ſuppoſe it only *leſs repreſentative* of the kind than the comic; not that the draught of ſo much character as it is concerned to repreſent ſhould not be *general*: the contrary of which I have aſſerted and explained at large elſewhere [*Notes on the A. P. ver.* 317.]

Next, I have ſaid, the characters of juſt comedy are *general*. And this I explain by the inſtance of the *avare* of Moliere, which conforms more to the idea of *avarice*, than to that of the real *avaricious man*. But here again, the reader will not underſtand me, as ſaying this in the ſtrict ſenſe of the words. I even think Moliere faulty in the inſtance given; though, with ſome neceſſary explanation, it may well enough ſerve to expreſs my meaning. The

The view of the comic ſcene being to delineate characters, this end, I ſuppoſe, will be attained moſt perfectly, by making thoſe characters as *univerſal* as poſſible. For thus the perſon ſhewn in the drama being the repreſentative of all characters of the ſame kind, furniſhes in the higheſt degree the entertainment of *humour*. But then this univerſality muſt be ſuch as agrees not to our idea of the *poſſible* effects of the character as conceived in the abſtract, but to the *actual* exertion of its powers which experience juſtifies, and common life allows. Moliere, and before him Plautus, had offended in this; that for a picture of the *avaritious man*, they preſented us with a fantaſtic unpleaſing draught of the *paſſion of avarice*. I call this a *fantaſtic* draught, becauſe it hath no archetype in nature. And it is, farther, an *unpleaſing* one, for being the delineation of a *ſimple paſſion unmixed*, it wanted all thoſe

— Lights and ſhades, whoſe well accorded ſtrife
Gives all the ſtrength and colour of our life.

Theſe *lights and ſhades* (as the poet finely calls the intermixture of many paſſions which, with the *leading* or principal one, form the human character) muſt be blended together in every picture of dramatic manners; becauſe the avowed buſineſs of the drama is to image real life. Yet the draught of the *leading* paſſion muſt be as general as this *ſtrife* in nature permits, in order to expreſs the intended character more perfectly.

All

All which again is eaſily illuſtrated in the inſtance of painting. In *portraits of character*, as we may call thoſe that give a picture of the *manners*, the artiſt, if he be of real ability, will not go to work on the poſſibility of an abſtract idea. All he intends, is to ſhew that ſome one quality *predominates*: and this he images ſtrongly and by ſuch ſignatures as are moſt conſpicuous in the operation of the *leading paſſion*. And when he hath done this, we may, in common ſpeech or in compliment, if we pleaſe, to his art, ſay of ſuch a portrait that it images to us not the *man* but the *paſſion*; juſt as the antients obſerved of the famous ſtatue of Apollodorus by Silarion, that it expreſſed not the angry *Apollodorus*, but his paſſion of *anger*[d]. But by this muſt be underſtood only that he has well expreſſed the leading parts of the deſigned character. For the reſt he treats his *ſubject* as he would any other; that is, he repreſents the *concomitant affections*, or conſiders merely that general ſymmetry and proportion which are expected in a human figure. And this is to copy nature which affords no ſpecimen of a man turned all into a ſingle paſſion. No metamorphoſis could be more ſtrange or incredible. Yet portraits of this vicious taſte are the admiration of common ſtarers, who, if they find a picture of a *miſer* for inſtance (as there is no commoner ſubject of moral portraits) in a collection, where any muſcle is ſtrained and feature hardened into the expreſſion of

[d] *Non hominem ex ære fecit, ſed iracundiam.* [*Plin.* 34. 8]

this

this idea, never fail to profeſs their wonder and approbation of it.—On this idea of excellence, Reubens' book of the PASSIONS muſt be ſaid to contain a ſet of the juſteſt *moral portraits:* And the CHARACTERS of Theophraſtus might be recommended, in a *dramatic* view, as preferable to thoſe of Terence.

The virtuoſi in the fine arts would certainly laugh at the former of theſe judgments. But the latter, I ſuſpect, will not be thought ſo extraordinary. At leaſt if one may gueſs from the practice of ſome of our beſt comic writers, and the ſucceſs which ſuch plays have commonly met with. It were eaſy to inſtance in almoſt all plays of character. But if the reader would ſee the extravagance of building dramatic manners on abſtract ideas, in its full light, he needs only turn to B. Johnſon's *Every man out of his humour*; which under the name of a *play of character* is in fact, an unnatural, and, as the painters call it, *hard* delineation of a group of *ſimply exiſting paſſions*, wholly chimerical, and unlike to any thing we obſerve in the commerce of real life. Yet this comedy has always had its admirers. And *Randolph* in particular, was ſo taken with the deſign, that he ſeems to have formed his *muſe's looking-glaſs* in expreſs imitation of it.

Shakeſpeare, we may obſerve, is in this as in all the other more eſſential beauties of the drama, a perfect model. If the diſcerning reader peruſe attentively his comedies with this view he will find his *beſt-marked* characters diſcourſing thro' a great deal of their *parts*,

juſt

juſt like any other, and only expreſſing their eſſential and leading qualities occaſionally, and as circumſtances concur to give an eaſy expoſition to them. This ſingular excellence of his comedy, was the effect of his copying faithfully after nature, and of the force and vivacity of his genius which made him attentive to what the progreſs of the ſcene ſucceſſively preſented to him: whilſt *imitation* and *inferior talents* occaſion little writers to wind themſelves up into the habit of attending perpetually to their main view, and a ſolicitude to keep their favourite characters in conſtant play and agitation. Tho' in this illiberal exerciſe of their wit, they may be ſaid to uſe the *perſons of their drama* as a certain facetious ſort do their *acquaintance*, whom they urge and teize with their civilities, not to give them a reaſonable ſhare in the converſation, but to force them to play *tricks* for the diverſion of the company.

I have been the longer on this argument, to prevent the reader's carrying what I ſay of the ſuperiority of *plays of character* to *plays of intrigue* into an extreme; a miſtake, into which ſome good writers have been unſuſpectingly betrayed by the acknowledged truth of the general principle. It is ſo natural for men on all occaſions, to fly out into extremes, that too much care cannot be had to retain them in a due medium. But to return from this digreſſion to the conſideration of the difference of the two dramas.

3. A ſameneſs of *character is not uſually objected to in tragedy: in comedy, it would not be endured.* The paſſion

paſſion of *avarice*, to reſume the inſtance given above, being the main object, we find nothing but a diguſtful repetition in a ſecond attempt to delineate that *character*. *A particular cruel man* only engroſſing our regard in *Nero*, when the train of events evidencing ſuch cruelty is changed, we have all the novelty we look for, and can contemplate, with pleaſure, the very *ſame* character, ſet forth by a different courſe of action, or diſplayed in ſome other *perſon*.

4. Comedy ſucceeds beſt when the ſcene is laid *at home*, tragedy for the moſt part when *abroad*. "This "appears at firſt ſight whimſical and capricious, but "has its foundation in nature. What we chiefly ſeek "in comedy is a true image of life and *manners*, but "we are not eaſily brought to think we have it given "us, when dreſſed in foreign modes and faſhions. "And yet a good writer muſt follow his ſcene, and "obſerve decorum. On the contrary, 'tis the "action in tragedy which moſt engages our atten- "tion. But to fit a domeſtick occurrence for the "ſtage we muſt take greater liberties with the action "than a well-known ſtory will allow." [*Pope's Works* vol. iv. p. 185.]

Other *characters* of the two dramas, as well *peculiar*, as *common*, which might be accounted for from the juſt notion of them, delivered above, I leave to the obſervation of the reader. For my intention is not to write a complete treatiſe on the drama, but briefly to lay down ſuch principles, from whence its *laws* may be derived.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Of the Genius of Comedy.

BUT it may not be amiſs to expreſs myſelf a little more fully as to the *genius* of comedy; which for want of paſſing through the hands of ſuch a critic, as Ariſtotle, has been leſs perfectly underſtood.

Its *end* is the production of *humour*: or which comes to the ſame thing, "of that *pleaſure*, which "the *truth* of repreſentation affords, in the *exhibi-* "*tion* of the *private characters* of life, more parti- "cularly their *ſpecific differences*." I add this *latter* clauſe, becauſe the principal pleaſure we take in contemplating characters conſiſts in noting thoſe *differences*. The general attributes of humanity, if repreſented ever ſo truly, give us but a ſlender entertainment. They, of courſe, make a part of the drama; but we chiefly delight in a picture of thoſe peculiar *traits*, which diſtinguiſh the ſpecies. Now theſe diſcriminating marks in the characters of men are not *neceſſarily* the cauſes of ridicule, or pleaſantry of any kind; but *accidentally*, and according to the nature or quality of them. The vanity, and impertinent boaſting of *Thraſo* is the natural object of *contempt*, and, when truly and forcibly expreſſed in his own character, provokes *ridicule*. The eaſy humanity of *Mitio*, which is the leading part of his character, is

the object of *approbation*; and, when ſhewn in his own conduct, excites a *pleaſure*, in common with all juſt *expreſſion of the manners*, but of a *ſerious* nature, as being joined with the ſentiment of *eſteem*.

But now as moſt men find a greater pleaſure in gratifying the paſſion of *contempt*, than the calm inſtinct of *approbation*, and ſince perhaps the conſtitution of human life is ſuch, as affords more exerciſe for the one, than the other, hence it hath come to paſs, that the comic poet, who paints for the generality, and follows nature, chuſes more commonly to ſelect and deſcribe thoſe *peculiarities* in the human character, which, by their nature, excite *pleaſantry*, than ſuch as create a ſerious regard and eſteem. Hence ſome perſons have appropriated the name of *comedies* to thoſe dramas, which chiefly aim at producing *humour*, in the more *proper* ſenſe of the word; under which view it means "ſuch an expreſſion or picture of what "is odd, or inordinate in each character, as gives "us the fulleſt and ſtrongeſt image of the original, "and by the truth of the repreſentation expoſes "the *ridicule* of it." And it is certain, that comedy receives great advantage from repreſentations of this kind. Nay, it cannot well ſubſiſt without them. Yet it doth not exclude the other and more *ſerious* entertainment, which, as it ſtands on the ſame foundation of *truth of repreſentation*, I venture to include under the *common term*.

Further, there are *two ways* of evidencing the characteriſtic and predominant qualities of men, or, of producing *humour*, which require to be obſerved.

The *one* is, when they are ſhewn in the perpetua courſe and tenor of the repreſentation; that is, when the *humour* reſults from the *general* conduct of the perſon in the drama, and the diſcourſe, which he holds in it. The *other* is, when by an happy and lively ſtroke, the characteriſtic quality is laid open and expoſed *at once*.

The *firſt* ſort of *humour* is that which we find in the antients, and eſpecially Terence. The *latter* is almoſt peculiar to the moderns; who, in uniting theſe two ſpecies of *humour*, have brought a vaſt improvement to the comic ſcene. The reaſon of this difference may perhaps have been the ſingular ſimplicity of the old writers, who were contented to take up with ſuch ſentiments or circumſtances, as moſt naturally and readily occurred in the courſe of the drama: whereas the moderns have been ambitious to ſhew a more exquiſite and ſtudied inveſtigation into the workings of human nature, and have ſought out for thoſe peculiarly ſtriking lineaments, in which the eſſence of character conſiſts. On the ſame account, I ſuppoſe it was that the antients had *fewer* characters in their plays, than the moderns, and thoſe more *general*; that is, their dramatic writers were well ſatisfied with picturing the moſt *uſual* perſonages, and in their moſt *obvious* lights. They did not, as the moderns (who, if they would aſpire to the praiſe of *novelty*, were obliged to this route) caſt about for leſs *familiar* characters; and the nicer and *leſs obſerved* pecularities which diſtinguiſh *each*. Be it as it will, the obſervation is certain. Later dramatiſts have apparently

parently ſhewn a more accurate knowledge of human life: and, by opening theſe new and untryed veins of *humour*, have exceedingly enriched the comedy of our times.

But, though we are not to look for the *two ſpecies of humour*, beforementioned, in the ſame perfection on the ſimpler ſtages of *Greece and Rome*, as in *our* improved Theatres, yet the *firſt* of them was clearly ſeen and ſucceſsfully practiſed by the antient comic maſters; and there are not wanting in them ſome few examples even of the *laſt*. "The old man in the *Mother-in-Law* ſays to his Son,

Tum tu igitur nihil adtuliſti huc plus unâ ſententiâ.

"This, as an excellent perſon obſerved to me, is true "*humour*. For his character, which was that of a "lover of money, drew the obſervation naturally and "forcibly from him. His diſappointment of a rich "ſucceſſion made him ſpeak contemptibly of a moral "leſſon, which rich and covetous men, in their beſt "humours, have no high reverence for. And this "too without *deſign*; which is important, and ſhews "the diſtinction of what, in the more reſtrained "ſenſe of the word, we call *humour*, from other "modes of *pleaſantry*. For had a young friend of "the ſon, an unconcerned ſpectator of the ſcene "made the obſervation, it had then, in another's "mouth, been *wit*, or a deſigned *banter* on the fa-"ther's diſappointment. As, on the other hand, "when ſuch characteriſtic qualities are exaggerated,

" and the expreſſion of them ſtretched beyond *truth*,
" they become *buffoonry*, even in the perſon's
" *own*."

This is an inſtance of the *ſecond ſpecies* of humour, under its idea of exciting *ridicule*. But it may, alſo, be employed with the utmoſt *ſeriouſneſs*; as being only a method of expreſſing the *truth* of character in the *moſt ſtriking* manner. This ſame *old man* in the Hecyra will furniſh an example. Though a lover of money, he appears, in the main, of an honeſt and worthy nature, and to have born the trueſt affection to an amiable and favourite ſon. In the perplexity of the ſcene, which had ariſen from the ſuppoſed miſunderſtanding between his *ſon's* wife and his *own*, he propoſes, as an expedient to end all differences, to retire with his wife into the country. And to enforce this propoſal to the young man, who had his reaſons for being againſt it, he adds,

odioſa haec eſt aetas adoleſcentulis:
E medio aequum excedere eſt; poſtremo nos jam fabula
Sumus, Pamphile, ſenex atque anus.

There is nothing, I ſuppoſe in theſe words, which provokes a ſmile. Yet the *humour* is ſtrong, as before. In his ſollicitude to promote his ſon's ſatisfaction, he lets fall a ſentiment truly characteriſtic, and which old men uſually take great pains to conceal; I mean, his acknowledgment of *that ſuſpicious fear of contempt, which is natural to old age*. So true a picture of life in the repreſentation of this *weakneſs*, might, in

other circumſtances, have created ſome *pleaſantry*; but the *occaſion*, which forced it from him, diſcovering, at the ſame time, the *amiable diſpoſition* of the ſpeaker, covers the ridicule of it, or more properly converts it into an object of our *eſteem*.

We have here, then, a kind of *intermediate* ſpecies of *humour* betwixt the *ridiculous* and the *grave*; and and may perceive how inſenſibly the *one* becomes the *other*, by the accidental mixture of a virtuous *quality*, attracting *eſteem*. Which may ſerve to reconcile the reader to the application of this *term* even to ſuch *expreſſion* of the manners, as is perfectly *ſerious*; that is, where the *quality repreſented* is entirely, and without the leaſt *touch* of attending ridicule, the object of *moral approbation* to the mind. As in that famous aſſeveration of Chremes in the *Self-tormentor*:

Homo ſum: humani nihil à me alienum puto.

This is a ſtrong expreſſion of character; and coming unaffectedly from him in anſwer to the cutting reproof of his friend,

[*Chreme, tantumne ab re tuâſt otî tibi*
Aliena ut cures; ea quae nihil ad te adtinent?]

hath the eſſence of true *humour*, that is, is *a lively picture of the manners without deſign*.

Yet in this inſtance, which hath not been obſerved, the *humour*, though of a ſerious caſt, is heightened by a mixture of *ſatire*. For we are not to take this, as hath conſtantly been done, for a ſentiment of pure

humanity and the natural ebullition of benevolence. We may obſerve in it a deſigned ſtroke of ſatirical reſentment. *The Self-tormentor*, as we ſaw, had ridiculed Chremes' *curioſity* by a ſevere reproof. Chremes, to be even with him, reflects upon the *inhumanity* of his temper. "You, ſays "he, ſeem ſuch a foe to humanity, that you ſpare "it not *in yourſelf*; I, on the other hand, am affect-"ed, when I ſee it ſuffer in *another*."

Whence we learn, that, though, all which is requiſite to conſtitute comic humor, be *a juſt expreſſion of character without deſign*, yet ſuch *expreſſion* is felt more *ſenſibly*, when it is further enlivened by *ridicule*, or quickned by the poignancy of *ſatire*.

From the account of comedy, here given, it may appear, that the idea of this drama is much enlarged beyond what it was in Ariſtotle's time; who defines it to be, *an imitation of light and trivial actions, provoking ridicule*. His notion was taken from the ſtate and practice of the Athenian ſtage; that is, from the *old* or *middle* comedy, which anſwers to this deſcription. The great revolution, which the introduction of the *new comedy* made in the drama, did not happen till afterwards. This propoſed for its *object*, in general, *the actions and characters of ordinary life*; which are not of neceſſity, ridiculous, but as appears to every obſerver, of a mixt kind, *ſerious*, as well as *ludicrous*, and within their proper ſphere of influence, not unfrequently even *important*. This kind of *imitation* therefore, now admits the *ſerious*;

and

and its ſcenes, even without the leaſt mixture of *pleaſantry*, are entirely *comic*. Tho' the common run of *laughers* in our theatre are ſo little aware of the extenſion of this *province*, that I ſhould ſcarcely have hazarded the obſervation, but for the authority of *Terence*; who hath confeſſedly very little of the *pleaſant* in his drama. Nay, one of the moſt admired of his comedies hath the gravity, and, in ſome places, almoſt the ſolemnity of *tragedy itſelf*.

But this *idea* of comedy is not peculiar to the more polite and liberal *antients*. Some of the beſt *modern* comedies are faſhioned in agreement to it. And an inſtance or two, which I am going to produce from the ſtage of ſimple nature, may ſeem to ſhew it the plain ſuggeſtion of common ſenſe.

" The Amautas (ſays the author of the *Royal Com-*
" *mentaries of* PERU) who were men of the beſt in-
" genuity amongſt them, invented COMEDIES and
" TRAGEDIES; which, on their ſolemn feſtivals,
" they repreſented before the King and the Lords of
" his court. The plot or argument of their *tragedies*
" was to repreſent *their military exploits, and the tri-*
" *umphs, victories, and heroic actions of their renowned*
" *men*. And the ſubject or deſign of their *comedies*
" was, to demonſtrate *the manner of good huſbandry*
" *in cultivating and manuring their fields, and to ſhew*
" *the management of domeſtic affairs, with other fa-*
" *miliar matters*. Theſe plays, continues he, were
" not made up of obſcene and diſhoneſt farces, but

"ſuch as were of *ſerious entertainment*, *compoſed of* "*grave and acute ſentences*, *&c.*"

Two things are obſervable in this brief account of the Peruvian drama. *Firſt*, that its *ſpecies* had reſpect to the very different *objects* of the *higher* or *lower* ſtations. For the *great and powerful* were occupied in *war*: and *agriculture* was the chief employment of *private and ordinary life*. And, in this diſtinction, theſe *Indian*, perfectly agreed with the old Roman poets; whoſe PRAETEXTATA and TOGATA ſhew, that they had preciſely the ſame ideas of the drama. *Secondly*, we do not learn only, what difference there *was* betwixt their tragedy and comedy, but we are alſo, told, what difference there was *not*. It was not, that one was *ſerious*, and the other *pleaſant*. For we find it expreſly aſſerted of *both*, that they *were of grave and ſerious entertainment*.

And this laſt will explain a ſimilar obſervation on the Chineſe, *who*, as P. DE PREMERE acquaints us, *make no diſtinction betwixt tragedies and comedies*. That is, *no diſtinction*, but what the different *ſubjects* of each make neceſſary. They do not, as our European dramas, differ in this, that the *one* is intended to make us *weep*, and the other to make us *laugh*.

Theſe are full and preciſe teſtimonies. For I lay no ſtreſs on what the Hiſtorian of *Peru* tells us, *that there were no obſcenities in their comedy*; nor on what an encomiaſt of *China* pretends, *that there is not ſo much*

as

as an obſcene word in all their language[e]: as being ſenſible, that though indeed, theſe muſt needs be conſiderable abatements to the *humour* of their comic ſcenes, yet, their ingenuity might poſſibly find means to remedy theſe defects by the invention and dextrous application of the *double entendre*, which, on our ſtage, is found to ſupply the place of rank *obſcenity*, and, indeed, to do its office of exciting *laughter* almoſt as well.

But, as I ſaid, there is no occaſion for this *argument*. We may venture, without the help of it, to join theſe authorities to *that* of Terence; which, together, enable us to conclude very fully, in oppoſition to the general ſentiment, that *ridicule* is not of the *eſſence of comedy*[f].

But, becauſe the general practice of the *Greek and Roman theatres*, which ſtrongly countenance the other opinion, may ſtill be thought to outweigh this ſingle *Latin poet*, together with all the *eaſtern and weſtern barbarians*, that can be thrown into the balance, let me go one ſtep further, and, by explaining the riſe and occaſion of this *practice*, demonſtrate, that in

[e] P. ALVAREZ SEMEDO, ſpeaking of their poetry; ſays, "Le plus grand advantage & la plus grande utilité "qu'en ont tiré les CHINOIS, eſt cette grande modeſtie & "retenuë incomparable, qui ſe void en leurs ecrits, *n'ayant "pas meſme une lettre en tous leurs livres, n'yen toutes leurs "eſcritures, pour exprimer les parties honteuſes de la nature.*" [HIST. UNIV. DE LA CHINE, p. 82. à LYON 1667. 4to.]

[f] LE RIDICULE EST CE QU'IL Y A DE PLUS ESSENTIEL A LA COMEDIE [P. RAPIN REFLEX. SUR LA POET. p. 154. PARIS 1684.]

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the preſent caſe, their authority is, in fact, of no moment.

The form of the Greek, from whence the Roman and our drama is taken, though greatly *improved* by reflexion and juſt criticiſm, yet, like ſo many other great inventions, was, in its original, the *product* of pure chance. Each of its ſpecies had ſprung out of a *chorus-ſong*, which was afterwards incorporated into the legitimate drama, and found eſſential to its true form. But *reaſon*, which ſaw to eſtabliſh what was *right* in this fortuitous conformation of the drama, did not equally ſucceed in detecting and ſeparating what was *wrong*. For the *occaſion* of this chorus-ſong, in their religious feſtivities, was widely different: the buſineſs *at one time*, being to expreſs their gratitude, in celebrating the praiſes of their gods and heroes; at *another*, to indulge their mirth, in jeſting and ſporting among themſelves. The character of their drama, which had its riſe from hence, [g] conformed exactly to the

g Οἱ μὲν σεμνότεροι, τὰς καλὰς ἐμιμοῦντο πράξεις, καὶ τὰς τοῦ τοιούτων τύχας: οἱ δ' εὐτελέστεροι, τὰς τῶν φαύλων, ΠΡΩΤΟΝ ΨΟΓΟΥΣ ΠΟΙΟΥΝΤΕΣ, ΩΣΠΕΡ ΕΤΕΡΟΙ ΥΜΝΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΓΚΩΜΙΑ. [ΠΕΡ. ΠΟΙΗΤ. κδ.] This is Ariſtotle's account of the origin of the different *ſpecies of* POETRY. They were occaſioned, he ſays, by the different and even oppoſite *tempers and diſpoſitions of men: thoſe of a loftier ſpirit delighting in the encomiaſtic poetry, while the humbler ſort betook themſelves to ſatire.* But this, alſo, is the juſt account of the riſe and character of the different *ſpecies of the* DRAMA. For they grew up he tells us in this very chapter, from the DITHYRAMBIC, and PHALLIC, ſongs. And who were the *men*, who chaunted *theſe*, but the difference

difference of theſe *occaſions*. *Tragedy*, through all its ſeveral ſucceſſive ſtages of improvement was ſerious and even ſolemn. And a gay or rather buffoon ſpirit was the characteriſtic of *comedy*.

We ſee, then, the *genius* of theſe two poems was accidentally fixed in agreement to their reſpective *originals*; conſequent writers contenting themſelves to embelliſh and perfect, not *change*, the primary form. The practice of the antient ſtage, is then of no further authority, than as it accords to juſt criticiſm. The ſolemn caſt of their *tragedy* indeed, bears the teſt, and is found to be ſuitable to its real nature. The ſame does not appear of the burleſque form of *comedy*; no reaſon having been given, why *it* muſt, of neceſſity, have the *ridiculous* for its object. Nay the effects of improved criticiſm on the later Greek comedy give a preſumption of the direct contrary. For, in proportion to the gradual refinement of this *ſpecies* in the hands of its greateſt maſters, the buffoon caſt of the comic drama was inſenſibly dropt and

ΣΕΜΝΟΤΕΡΟΙ, and ΕΥΤΕΛΕΣΤΕΡΟΙ, beforementioned? And how were they *employed* in them, but the *former*, *in hymnning the praiſes of Bacchus*; *the latter in dealing about obſcene jokes and taunting invectives on each other?* So that the *characters* of the men, and their *ſubjects*, being exactly the ſame in *both*, what is ſaid of the *one* is equally applicable to the *other*. It was proper to obſerve this, or the reader, might, perhaps, object to the uſe, made of this paſſage, *here*, as well as *above*, where it is brought to illuſtrate Ariſtotle's notion of the *natures* of the tragic and comic poetry.

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even grew into a ſeverity, which departed at length, very widely from the original idea. The admirable ſcholar of THEOPHRASTUS, who had been tutored in the exact ſtudy of human life, ſaw ſo much of the genuine character of true comedy, that he cleanſed it, at once, from the greater part of thoſe buffoonries, which had, till his time, defiled its nature. His great imitator, Terence went ſtill further; and, whether impelled by his native humour, or determined by his truer taſte, mixed ſo little of the *ridiculous* in his comedy, as plainly ſhews, it might, in his opinion ſubſiſt entirely without it. His *practice* indeed, and the *theory*, here delivered, nearly meet. And the concluſion is, that *comedy*, which is the image of private life, may take either character of *pleaſant* or *ſerious*, as it chances, or even *unite* them into one piece; but that the *former* is, by no means, more eſſential to its conſtitution, than the *latter*.

I foreſee but one objection, that can be made to this theory; which has, in effect, been obviated already. "It may be ſaid, that, if this account "of *comedy* be juſt, it would follow, that it might, "with equal propriety, admit the graveſt and "moſt affecting events, which inferior life "furniſhes, as the lighteſt. Whereas it is noto-"rious, that diſtreſſes of a deep and ſolemn "nature, though faithfully copied from the fortunes "of private men, would never be endured, under "the name of *comedy*, on the ſtage. Nay, ſuch re-"preſentations would rather paſs, in the public "judg-

" judgment, for legitimate *tragedies*; of which kind, we " have, indeed, ſome examples in our language."

Two things are miſtaken in this objection. *Firſt*, it ſuppoſes, that deep diſtreſſes of every kind are inconſiſtent with comedy; the contrary of which may be learnt from the SELF-TORMENTOR of Terence. *Next*, it inſinuates, that, if deep diſtreſſes of any kind may be admitted into comedy, the *deepeſt* may. Which is equally erroneous. For the *manners* being the proper object of comedy, the *diſtreſs* muſt not exceed a certain degree of *ſeverity*, leſt it draw off the mind from them, and confine it to the *action* only: as would be the caſe of *adultery*, *murder*, and other atrocious crimes, infeſting *private*, as well as *public*, life, were they to be repreſented, in all their horrors, on the ſtage. And though ſome of theſe, as *adultery*, have been brought, of late, into the comic ſcene, yet it was not till it had loſt the atrocity of its nature, and was made the ſubject of mirth and pleaſantry to the faſhionable world. But for this happy diſpoſition of the times, comedy, as managed by ſome of our writers, had loſt its nature, and become *tragic*. And, yet, conſidered as *tragic*, ſuch repreſentations of low life had been improper. Becauſe, where the intent is to *affect*, the ſubject is with more advantage taken from *high life*, all the circumſtances being, there, more peculiarly adapted to anſwer that end.

The ſolution then, of the difficulty is, in one word, this. All *diſtreſſes* are not *improper* in comedy; but ſuch only as attach the mind to the *fable*, in neglect of the *manners*, which are its chief object. On the

the other hand, all *diſtreſſes* are not *proper* in tragedy; but ſuch only as are of force to intereſt the mind in the *action*, preferably to the obſervation of the *manners*; which can only be done, or is done moſt effectually, when the *diſtreſsful event*, repreſented, is taken from *public life*. So that the *diſtreſſes*, ſpoken of, are equally unſuited to what the natures *both* of *comedy and tragedy*, reſpectively, demand.

CHAP. III.

Of M. de Fontenelle's Notion of Comedy.

NOtwithſtanding the pains I have taken, in the preceding chapters, to eſtabliſh my theory of the comic drama, I find myſelf obliged to ſupport it ſtill farther againſt the authority of a very eminent modern critic. M. de Fontenelle hath juſt now publiſhed two volumes of plays, amongſt which are ſome comedies of a very ſingular character. They are not only in a high degree, *pathetic*; but the ſcene of them is laid in *antiquity*; and great perſonages ſuch as *Kings*, *Princeſſes*, &c. are of the drama. He hath beſides endeavoured to juſtify this extraordinary ſpecies of comedy by a very ingenious preface. It will therefore be neceſſary for me to examine this new ſyſtem, and to obviate, as far as I can, the prejudices which the name of the author, and the intrinſic merit of the plays themſelves, will occaſion in favour of it.

His

His ſyſtem, as explained in the preface to theſe comedies, is, briefly, this.

" The *ſubject* of dramatic repreſentation, he ob-
" ſerves, is ſome event or action of *human life*, which
" can be conſidered only in two views, as being
" either that of *public*, or of *private* perſons. The
" *end* of ſuch repreſentation, continues he, is to
" *pleaſe*, which it doth either by engaging the
" attention, or or by moving the paſſions. The
" *former* is done by repreſenting to us ſuch events
" as are *great*, *noble*, *ſingular*, *or unexpected*: The
" *latter* by ſuch as are *dreadful*, *pitiable*, *tender*, *or*
" *pleaſant*. Of theſe ſeveral ſources of *pleaſure*, he
" forms what he calls a *dramatic ſcale*, the extremes
" of which he admits to be altogether inconſiſtent;
" no art being ſufficient to bring together the
" *grand*, the *noble*, or the *terrible* into the ſame piece
" with the *pleaſant or ridiculous*. The impreſſions
" of theſe objects, he allows, are perfectly op-
" poſed to each other. So that a tragedy which
" takes for its ſubject a *noble*, or *terrible* event,
" can by no means admit the *pleaſant*. And
" a comedy which repreſents a *pleaſant* action, can
" never admit the *terrible* or *noble*. But it is other-
" wiſe, he conceives, with the intermediate ſpecies
" of this ſcale. The *ſingular*, the *pitiable*, the
" *tender* which fill up the interval betwixt the *noble*
" and *ridiculous*, are equally conſiſtent with tragedy
" and comedy. An uncommon ſtroke of Fortune
" may as well befall a peaſant as a prince. And

" two

" two lovers of an inferior condition, may have as " lively a paſſion for each other, and when ſome un- " lucky event ſeparates them, may deſerve our pity as " much, as thoſe of the higheſt fortune. Theſe ſi- " tuations then are equally ſuited to both dramas. " They will only be modified in each a little diffe- " rently. From hence he concludes, that there may " be *dramatic repreſentations*, which are neither per- " fectly tragedies nor perfectly comedies, but yet " partake of the nature of each, and that in different " proportions. There might be a ſpecies of *tragedy*, " for inſtance, which ſhould unite the *tender* with " the *noble* in any degree or even ſubſiſt entirely by " means of the *tender*: And of *comedy*, which " ſhould aſſociate the *tender* with the *pleaſant*, or " even retain the *tender* throughout to a certain de- " gree to the entire excluſion of the *pleaſant*.

" As to his laying the *ſcene* of his comedy in " Greece, he thinks this practice ſufficiently juſti- " fied by the practice of the French writers, who " make no ſcruple to lay their ſcene abroad, as in " *Spain* or *England*.

" Laſtly, for what concerns the introduction of " great perſonages into the comic drama, he obſerves " that by *ordinary life*, which he ſuppoſes the proper " ſubject of comedy, he underſtands as well that " of Emperors and Princes, at times when they are " only men, as of inferior perſons. And he thinks " it very evident that what paſſes in the ordinary

" *life*

" *life*, ſo underſtood, of the greateſt men is truly " comic [h]."

This is a ſimple expoſition of M. de Fontenelle's idea of comedy, which, however, he hath ſet off with great elegance and a plauſibility of illuſtration, ſuch as writers of his claſs are never at a loſs to give to any ſubject they would recommend.

Now tho' the principal aim of what I have to offer in confutation of this ſyſtem be to combat the ingenious writer's notion of comedy, yet as the tenor of his *preface* leads him to deliver his ſentiments alſo of tragedy, I ſhall not ſcruple intermixing, after his example, ſome reflexions on this latter drama.

M. de Fontenelle ſets out with obſerving, that the end of dramatic repreſentation is to *pleaſe*. This end is very general. But he explains himſelf more preciſely, by ſaying, " *this pleaſure is of two kinds, and conſiſts either in attaching the mind or affecting it.*" And this is not much amiſs. But his further explanation of theſe terms is ſuſpicious. " The mind, ſays " he, is ATTACHED by the repreſentation of what is " *great, noble, ſingular*, or *unexpected:* It is AFFECTED " by what is *terrible, pitiable, tender*, or *pleaſant* [i] ". In this enumeration he forgets the merely *natural* draught of the manners. Yet this is ſurely one of the

[h] *Pref. generale, Tom.* vii. Par. 1751.

[i] " On attache par le grand, par le noble, par le rare, " par l'imprévû. On émeut par le terrible ou affreux, " par le pitoyable, par le tendre, par le plaiſant ou ridi- " cule." *p.* xiv.

means by which the drama is enabled to *attach* the ſpectator. With me, I confeſs, this is the firſt excellence of comedy. Nor could he mean to include this ſource of pleaſure under his *ſecond* diviſion. For tho' a lively picture of the manners may in ſome ſort be ſaid to *affect* us, yet certainly not as coming under the conſideration of what is *terrible*, *pitiable*, *tender*, or *ridiculous*, but ſimply of what is *natural*. The picture is *pleaſant* or otherwiſe, as it chances; but is always the ſource of entertainment to the obſerver. When the pleaſantry is high, it takes indeed the paſſion of *ridicule*. In other inſtances it can ſcarcely be ſaid to *move*, "emouvoir." Now this I take to be a very conſiderable omiſſion. For if the obſervation of character be a *pleaſure*, which comedy is more particularly qualified to give and which is not in any degree ſo compatible with tragedy, does not this bid fair for being the *proper* end of comedy? Human life, he ſays, which is the ſubject of the drama, can only be regarded in two views, as either that *of the great and principally of kings*, and that of *private men*. Now the *attachments* and *emotions*, he ſpeaks of, are excited more powerfully and to more advantage in a repreſentation of the *former*. That which is *peculiar* to a draught of *ordinary life*, or which is attained *moſt perfectly* by it, is the delight ariſing from a juſt exhibition of the manners. No, he will ſay. The *pleaſant* belongs as peculiarly to a picture of common life, as the *natural*.

Surely

Surely not. Common life *diſtorted*, or what we call *farce*, gives the entertainment of *ridicule* more perfectly than comedy. The only pleaſure, which an expoſition of *ordinary life* affords, diſtinct from that we receive from a view of *high life* on the one hand, and ordinary life *diſfigured* on the other, is the ſatisfaction of contemplating the *truth of character*. However then this ſpecies of repreſentation may be improved by incorporating other kinds of excellence with it, is not *this*, *of pleaſing* by the *truth* of character, to be conſidered as the *appropriate* end of comedy?

I don't diſpute the propriety of ſerious or even affecting comedies. I have already explained myſelf as to this point, and have ſhewn under what reſtrictions *the weeping comedy*, *la larmoyante comedie*, as the French call it, may be admitted on my plan. The main queſtion is, whether there be any foundation in nature for two diſtinct and ſeparate ſpecies *only* of the drama; or whether, as he pretends, a certain *ſcale*, which connects by an inſenſible communication the ſeveral modifications of dramatic repreſentation, unites and incorporates the two ſpecies into one.

It is true the laws of the drama, as formed by Ariſtotle out of the Greek poets, can of themſelves be no rule to us in this matter; becauſe theſe poets had given no example of ſuch intermediate ſpecies. This, for aught appears to the contrary, may be an extenſion of the province of the drama. The queſtion then muſt be tried by the ſucceſs of this new

practice, compared with the general dictates of common ſenſe.

For I perfectly agree with this judicious critic, that we have a right to inquire if, in what concerns the ſtage, we are not ſometimes governed by *eſtabliſhed cuſtoms* inſtead of rules; for *Rules* they will not deſerve to be eſteemed till they have undergone the rigid ſcrutiny of reaſon[k].

In reſpect of the *Practice* then, it muſt be owned there are many ſtories in private life capable of being worked up in ſuch a manner as to move the paſſions ſtrongly; and on the contrary, many ſubjects taken from the great world capable of diverting the ſpectator by a pleaſant picture of the manners. And laſtly, it is alſo true, that both theſe ends may be effected together, in ſome degree, in either piece. But here is the point of enquiry. Whether if the end in view be to *affect*, this will not be accompliſhed BETTER by taking a ſubject from the public than private fortunes of men: Or, if the End be to *pleaſe by the truth of character*, whether we are not likely to perceive this pleaſure more FULLY when the ſtory is of private, rather than of public life? For, as Ariſtotle ſaid finely on a like occaſion, *we are not to look for ev'ry ſort of pleaſure from tragedy*

[k] Que nous ſommes en droit d'examiner ſi, en fait de Theatre, nous n'aurions pas quelquefois des *habitudes* au lieu de *regles*, car les regles ne peuvent l'être qu'après avoir ſubi les rigueurs du tribunal de la raiſon. p. 37.

[or

[or comedy] *but that which is peculiarly proper to each*[1]. "Human life, this writer ſays, can be con-"ſidered but as *high*, or *low*;" and a "repreſen-"tation of it can pleaſe only as it *attaches*, or *affects*." I aſk then, to which ſort of life ſhall the dramatic poet confine himſelf, when he would endeavour to raiſe theſe *affections* or theſe *attachments* to the higheſt pitch. The anſwer is plain. For if the poet would excite the tender paſſions, they will riſe higher of neceſſity, when awakened by noble ſubjects than if called forth by ſuch as are of ordinary and familiar notice. This is occaſioned by what one may call a TRANSITION OF THE PASSIONS: that affection of the mind, which is produced by the impreſſion of great objects, being more eaſily convertible into the ſtronger degrees of pity and commiſeration, than ſuch as ariſes from a view of the concerns of common life. The more *important* the intereſt, the greater part our minds take in it, and the more ſuſceptible are we of *paſſion*.

On the other hand, when the intended pleaſure is to reſult from ſtrong pictures of human nature, this will be felt more entirely, and with more ſincerity when we are at leiſure to attend to them in the repreſentation

[1] Οὐ πᾶσαν δεῖ ζητεῖν ἡδονὴν ἀπὸ τραγῳδίας, ἀλλὰ τὴν οἰκείαν. Poiɴt. x. ιδ.

of inferior perſons, than when the rank of the ſpeaker, or dignity of the ſubject, is conſtantly drawing ſome part of our obſervation to itſelf. In a word, tho' *mixed dramas* may give us pleaſure, yet the pleaſure, in either kind, will be LESS in proportion to the mixture. And the *end* of each will be then attained MOST PERFECTLY when its character, according to the antient practice, is obſerved.

To conſider then the writer's favourite poſition, that "*le pitoyable and le tendre* are common both to tragedy and comedy." The poſition, in general, is true. The difficulty is in fixing the degree, with which it ought to prevail in each. If *paſſion* predominates in a picture of private life, I call it a *tragedy* of public ſtory, becauſe it produces the *end* which tragedy deſigns. If *humour* predominates in a draught of private life, I call it a *comedy* of public ſtory, becauſe it gives the *pleaſure* of pure comedy. Let theſe then be two new ſpecies of the drama, if you pleaſe, and let new names be invented for them. Yet were I a poet, I ſhould certainly adhere to the old practice. That is, if I wanted to produce *paſſion*, I ſhould think myſelf able to raiſe it higheſt on a great ſubject. And if I aimed to *attach* by *humour* I ſhould depend on catching the whole attention of the ſpectator more ſucceſsfully on a familiar ſubject.

But by a *familiar ſubject*, this critic will ſay, he means as I do, a ſubject taken from *ordinary life*; and that the affairs of kings and princes, may very properly

perly come into comedy under this view. Beſides the reaſon already produced againſt this innovation [p. 80.] I have this further exception to it. The buſineſs of comedy, he will allow, is in part at leaſt to exhibit the *manners*. Now the princely or heroic comedy is ſingularly improper for this end. If perſons of ſo diſtinguiſhed a rank be the actors in comedy, propriety demands that they be ſhewn in conformity to their characters in real life. But now that very politeneſs which reigns in the courts of princes and the houſes of the great, prevents the *manners* from ſhewing themſelves, at leaſt with that diſtinctneſs and *relief* which we look for in dramatic characters. Inferior perſonages, acting with leſs reſerve and caution, afford the fitteſt occaſion to the poet of expreſſing their genuine tempers and diſpoſitions. Or, if a picture of the manners be expected from the introduction of great perſons, it can be only in tragedy, where the importance of the intereſts, and the ſtrong play of the paſſions ſtrip them of their borrowed diſguiſes, and lay open their true characters. So that what is called *polite* and much more *heroic*, comedy is the leaſt fitted, of any kind of drama, to furniſh this pleaſure.

The antients appear to have had no doubt at al on this matter. The tragedy on low life, and comedy on high life, were refinements altogether unknown to them. What then hath occaſioned this revolution

of taſte amongſt us? Principally I conceive theſe three things.

1. The comedy on high life hath ariſen from a *different ſtate of government*. In the free towns of Greece there was no room for that diſtinction of high and low comedy, which the moderns have introduced. And the reaſon was, the members of thoſe communities were ſo nearly on a level, that any one was a repreſentative of the reſt. There was no ſtanding ſubordination of royalty, nobility, and commonalty, as with us. Their way of ennobling their characters was by making them Generals, Ambaſſadors, Magiſtrates, &c. and then, in that public view, they were fit perſonages for tragedy. When ſtripped of theſe enſigns of authority, they became ſimple citizens.

Amongſt us, perſons of elevated rank make a ſeparate order in the community, whoſe private lives however might, no doubt, be the ſubject of comic repreſentation. Why then are not theſe fit perſonages for comedy? The reaſon has been given. They want *dramatic manners*. Or if they did not, their elevated and ſeparate eſtate makes the generality conceive with ſuch reverence of them, that it would ſhock their notions of high life to ſee them employed in a courſe of comic adventures. And of this M. de Fontenelle himſelf was ſufficiently ſenſible. For ſpeaking in another place of the importance which the tragic action receives from the dignity of its perſons, he ſays, "When

"When the actions are of ſuch a kind as that, with-
"out loſing any thing of their beauty, they might
"paſs between inferior perſons, the names of kings
"and princes are nothing but a foreign ornament
"which the poet gives to his ſubject. Yet *this or-*
"*nament, foreign as it may be, is neceſſary: ſo fated*
"*are we to be always dazzled by titles.* [m]" Should he not have ſeen then, that this pageantry of titles, which is ſo requiſite to raiſe the dignity of the tragic drama, muſt for the ſame reaſon prevent the familiarity of the comic? The great themſelves are, no doubt, in this, as other inſtances, above *vulgar* prejudices. But the dramatic poet writes for the people.

2. The tragedy on low life, I ſuſpect, has been chiefly owing to our *modern romances:* which have brought the tender paſſion into great repute. It is the conſtant and almoſt ſole object of *le pitoyable* and *le tendre* in our drama. Now the prevalency of this paſſion in all degrees, hath made it thought an indifferent matter, whether the ſtory, that exemplifies it, be taken from low or high life. As it rages equally in both, the pathos, it was believed, would be juſt the ſame. And it is true, if tragedy confine itſelf to the diſplay of this paſſion, the difference will be leſs ſenſible than in other inſtances. Becauſe the concern terminates more directly in the *tender*

[m] *Reflex. ſur la poet. p.* 132.

pair

pair themſelves, and does not ſo neceſſarily extend itſelf to others. Yet to heighten this ſame pathos by the *grand* and *important*, would methinks be the means of affording a ſtill higher pleaſure.

3. After all, that effuſion of *ſoftneſs* which prevails to ſuch a degree in all our dramas, comic as well as tragic, to the excluſion of every other intereſt, is, perhaps, beſt accounted for by this writer. As the matter is delicate, I chuſe to give it in his own words: " On s'imagine naturellement, que les " piéces Grecques & les nôtres ont été jugées au " même tribunal, à celui d'un public aſſés egal dans " les deux nations; mais cela n'eſt pas tout-" à-fait vrai. Dans le tribunal d'Athenes, *les femmes* " n'avoient pas de voix, ou n'en avoient que tres " peu. Dans le tribunal de Paris, c'eſt préciſément " le contraire; ici il eſt donc queſtion de plaire aux " femmes, qui aſſurément aimeront mieux le pitoy-" able & le tendre, que terrible et même le grand." He adds, "*Et je ne crois pas au fond qu'elles ayent grand* " *tort.*" And what well-bred man but would ſubſcribe to this opinion?

On the whole, this attempt of M. de Fontenelle, to innovate in the province of comedy, puts one in mind of that he made, many years ago, in paſtoral poetry. It is exactly the ſame ſpirit which has governed this polite writer in both adventures. He was once for bringing courtiers in maſquerade into *Arcadia*.

dia. And now he would ſet them unmask'd on the comic ſtage. Here, at leaſt, he thought they would be in place. But the ſimplicity of paſtoral dialogue would not ſuffer the one; and the familiarity of comic action forbids the other. It muſt be confeſſed, however, he hath ſucceeded better in the example of his comedies, than his paſtorals. And no wonder. For what we call the *faſhions* and *manners* are confined to certain conditions of life, ſo that *paſtoral courtiers* are an evident contradiction and abſurdity. But the *appetites and paſſions* extending through all ranks, hence low tricks and low amours are thought to ſuit the miniſter, and ſharper alike. However it be, the fact is, that M. de Fontenelle hath ſucceeded beſt in his *comedies*. And as his theory is likely to gain more credit from the ſucceſs of his practice than the force of his reaſoning, I think it proper to cloſe theſe remarks with an obſervation or two upon it.

There are, I obſerved, three things to be conſidered in his comedies, his *introduction of great perſonages, his practie of laying the ſcene in antiquity, and his pathos*.

Now to ſee the impropriety of the *firſt* of theſe innovations, we need only obſerve with what art he endeavours to conceal it. His very dexterity in managing his comic heroes clearly ſhews the natural repugnance he felt in his own mind betwixt the repreſentation

ſentation of ſuch characters, and even his own idea of the comic drama.

The TYRANT is a ſtrange title of a comedy. It required ſingular addreſs to familiarize this frightful perſonage to our conceptions. Which yet he hath tolerably well done, but by ſuch expedients as confute his general theory. For to bring him down to the level of a comic character, he gives us to underſtand, that the *Tyrant* was an uſurper, who from a very mean birth had forced his way into the tyranny. And to lower him ſtill more, we find him repreſented, not only as odious to his people, but of a very contemptible character. He further makes him the tyrant only of a ſmall Greek town; ſo that he paſſes, with the modern reader, for little more than the Mayor of a corporation. There is alſo a plain illuſion in making a *ſimple citizen* demand his daughter in marriage. For under the cover of this word, which conveys the idea of a perſon in lower life, we think very little of the dignity of a free citizen of Corinth. Whence it appears that the poet felt the neceſſity of unkinging this tyrant as far as poſſible, before he could make a comic character of him.

The caſe of his ABDOLONIME is ſtill eaſier. 'Tis true the ſtructure of the fable requires us to have an eye to royalty, but all the pride and pomp of the regal character is ſtudiouſly kept out of ſight. Beſides, the affair of royalty does not commence till the action

action draws to a concluſion, the perſons of the drama being all ſimple particulars, and even of the loweſt figure through the entire courſe of it.

The king of Sidon is, further, a paltry ſovereign, and a creature of Alexander. And the characters of the perſons, which are indeed admirably touched, are purpoſely contrived to leſſen our ideas of ſovereignty.

The LYSIANASSE is a tragedy in form, of that kind which hath a happy cataſtrophe. The *perſons*, *ſubject* ev'ry thing ſo important, and attaches the mind ſo intirely to the event, that nothing intereſts more.

As to his *laying the ſcene in antiquity, and eſpecially in the free towns of Greece*, I would recommend it as an admirable expedient to all thoſe who are diſpoſed to follow him in this new province of heroic comedy. For amongſt other advantages, it gives the writer an occaſion to fill the courts of his princes with *ſimple citizens*, which, as was obſerved, by no means anſwer to our ideas of nobility. But in any other view I cannot ſay much for the practice. It is for obvious reaſons highly inconvenient. Even this writer found it ſo, when in one of his plays, the MACATE, he was obliged to break thro' the propriety of antient manners in order to adapt himſelf to the modern taſte. His duel, as he himſelf ſays, "*a l'air bien françois* "*et bien peu grec.*" The reader, if he pleaſes, may ſee his apology

apology for this tranſgreſſion of decorum. Or if there were no inconvenience of this ſort, the repreſentation of characters after the *antique* muſt, on many occaſions, be cold and diſguſting. At leaſt none but profeſſed ſcholars can be taken with it.

Nor is the uſage of the Latin writers any precedent. For, beſides that Horace, we know, condemned it as ſuitable only to the infancy of their comic poetry, the manners, laws, religion of the Greeks were in the main ſo ſimilar to their own, that the difference was hardly diſcernible. Or if it were otherwiſe in ſome points, the neighbourhood of this famous people and the intercourſe the Romans had with them, would bring them perfectly acquainted with ſuch difference. And this laſt reflection ſhews how inſufficient it was for the author to excuſe his own practice from the authority of his countrymen; who, ſays he, "never ſcruple laying their ſcene in Spain orEngland." Are the manners of antient Greece as familiar to a French pit, as thoſe of theſe two countries.

Laſtly, I have very little to object to the *pathos* of his comedy. When it is ſubſervient to the *manners*, as in the TESTAMENT and ABDOLONIME, I think it admirable. When it exceeds this degree and takes the attention intirely, as in the LYSIANASSE, it gives a pleaſure indeed, but not the pleaſure appropriate to comedy. I regard it as a faint imperfect ſpecies of tragedy. After all, I fear the *tender and pitiable* in comedy, tho' it muſt afford the higheſt pleaſure to ſenſible and elegant minds, is not perfectly

perfectly ſuited to the apprehenſions of the generality. Are they ſuſceptible of the ſoft and delicate emotions which the fine diſtreſs in the *Teſtament* is intended to raiſe? Every one indeed is capable of being delighted thro' the *paſſions*, but they muſt be worked up, as in tragedy, to a greater height, before the generality can receive that delight from them. The ſame objection, it will be ſaid, holds againſt the finer ſtrokes of character. Not, I think, with the ſame force. I doubt our ſenſe of imitation, eſpecially of the *ridiculous*, is quicker than our humanity. But I determine nothing. Both theſe pleaſures are perfectly conſiſtent. And my idea of comedy requires only that the *pathos* be kept in ſubordination to the *manners*.

CHAP. IV.

Of the Province of FARCE.

THUS much then for the general idea of COMEDY. If conſidered more accurately it is, further, of *two kinds*. And in conſidering theſe we ſhall come at a juſt notion of the province of FARCE. For this *mirror of private life* either, 1. reflects ſuch qualities and characters, as are common *to human nature at large:* or, 2. it repreſents the whims, extravagances, and caprices,

caprices, which characterize the folly of *particular perſons or times.*

Again, *each* of theſe is, further, to be ſubdivided into *two ſpecies.* For 1. the repreſentations of *common nature* may either be taken *accurately*, ſo as to reflect *a faithful and exact image* of their original; which alone is *that* I would call COMEDY, as beſt agreeing to the deſcription which Cicero gives of it, when he terms it IMAGINEM VERITATIS. Or, they may be forced and overcharged above the ſimple and juſt proportions of *nature*; as when the exceſſes of a *few* are given for *ſtanding* characters, when not the man is deſcribed but the *paſſion*, or when, in the draught of the man, the leading *feature* is extended beyond meaſure: And in theſe caſes the repreſentation holds of the lower province of FARCE. In like manner, 2. the other *ſpecies*, conſiſting in the repreſentation of *partial nature*, either tranſcribes ſuch characters as are peculiar to *certain countries or times*, of which *our comedy* is, in great meaſure, made up; or it preſents the image of *ſome real individual perſon*; which was the diſtinguiſhing character of the *old comedy* properly ſo called.

Both theſe kinds evidently belong to FARCE: not only as failing in that general and univerſal imitation of nature, which is alone deſerving the name of comedy, but, alſo, for this reaſon, that, being more directly written for the preſent purpoſe of diſcrediting certain *characters* or *perſons*, it is found convenient

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to exaggerate their peculiarities and enlarge their features; and ſo on a double account, they are to be referred to that *claſs*.

And thus the *three forms of dramatic compoſition*, the only ones, which good ſenſe acknowledges, are kept diſtinct: and the proper END and CHARACTER of each, clearly underſtood.

1. *Tragedy and Comedy*, by their lively but faithful repreſentations, cannot fail to *inſtruct*. Such natural exhibitions of the human character, being ſet before us in the clear mirror of the drama, muſt needs ſerve to the higheſt *moral uſes*, in awakening that inſtinctive approbation, which we cannot withhold from *virtue*, or in provoking the not leſs neceſſary deteſtation of *vice*. But this, though it be their beſt *uſe*, is, by no means, their primary *intention*. Their proper and immediate *end* is, to PLEASE: the *one*, more eſpecially, by intereſting the *affections*; the *other*, by *a juſt and delicate imitation of real life*. *Farce*, on the contrary, profeſſes to *entertain*, but this, in order more effectually to ſerve the intereſts of virtue and good ſenſe. Its proper *end* and purpoſe is, then, to INSTRUCT. Which the reader will underſtand me as ſaying, not of what we know by the name of *farce* on the modern ſtage (whoſe *prime* intention can hardly be thought even that low one, aſcribed to it by Mr. Dryden, *of* entertaining *citizens, country gentlemen, and Covent-Garden fops*) but of the proper and legitimate *end* of this *drama*; which, as the ſame excellent perſon obſerved, but with leſs propriety, of

comedy, is a ſharp manner of inſtruction *for the vulgar, who are never well amended, till they are more than ſufficiently expoſed.* [Pref. to Tranſ. of Freſnoy, p. xix.]

2. Though tragedy and comedy reſpect the *ſame general* END, yet purſuing it by *different means*, hence it comes to paſs, their CHARACTERS are wholly different. For tragedy, aiming at *pleaſure*, principally through the *affections*, whoſe flow muſt not be checked and interrupted by any counter impreſſions: and comedy as we have ſeen, addreſſing itſelf *principally* to our *natural ſenſe of reſemblance and imitation*, it follows, that the *ridiculous* can never be aſſociated with tragedy, without deſtroying its *nature*, though with the *ſerious comic* it very well conſiſts.

And here the *practice* coincides with the *rule*. All exact writers, though they conſtantly mix *grave and pleaſant* ſcenes together in the ſame *comedy*, yet never preſume to do this in *tragedy*, and ſo keep the two ſpecies of *tragedy and comedy* themſelves perfectly diſtinct. But,

3. It is quite otherwiſe with *comedy* and *farce*. Theſe almoſt perpetually run into each other. And yet the reaſon of the thing demands as intire and perfect a ſeparation in this caſe, as in the other. For the perfection of *comedy* lying in the accuracy and fidelity of univerſal repreſentation, and *farce* profeſſedly neglecting or rather wantonly tranſgreſſing the limits of common nature and juſt decorum, they claſh entirely with each other. And *comedy* muſt ſo far fail of giving the *pleaſure*, appropriate to its deſign, as it allies it ſelf with

with *farce*; while *farce*, on the other hand, forfeits the *uſe*, it intends, of promoting popular ridicule, by reſtraining itſelf within the cautious rules of *decency*, which *comedy* exacts.

But there is little occaſion to guard againſt this *latter* abuſe. The danger is all on the other ſide. And the paſſion for *farce*, has, in fact, poſſeſſed the modern poets to ſuch a degree that we have ſcarcely one example of a comedy, without this impure mixture. If any are to be excepted from this cenſure in Moliere, they are his *Miſanthrope* and *Tartuffe*, which are accordingly, by common allowance, the beſt of his large collection. In proportion as his other plays have leſs or more of this farcical turn, their true value hath been long ſince determined.

Of our own comedies, ſuch of them, I mean, as are worthy of criticiſm, Ben. Johnſon's *Alchymiſt* and *Volpone*, bid the faireſt for being written in this genuine unmixed manner. Yet, tho' their merits are very great, the impartial critic will hardly allow them this pefection. The ALCHYMIST is, I think, throughout exaggerated, and, at beſt, belongs to that ſpecies of comedy, which we have before called *particular and partial*. The extravagant purſuit ſo ſtrongly expoſed in that play, hath been now, of a long time forgotten, and we therefore find it difficult to enter fully into the humour of this highly wrought character. We may remark, in general, of ſuch ſubjects, that they are a ſtrong temptation to the writer to exceed the bounds of truth and mediocrity

in his draught of them at *firſt*, and are further liable to an imperfect, and even unfair ſentence from the reader *afterwards*. For the welcome reception, which theſe pictures of prevailing *local* folly meet with on the ſtage, cannot but induce the poet, almoſt without deſign, to inflame the repreſentation: And the want of *archetypes*, in a little time, makes it paſs for immoderate, were it originally given with ever ſo much diſcretion and juſtice. The plan of the Alchymiſt is then eſſentially ſuch as ſubjects this comedy to the imputations of *farce*.

The VOLPONE, on the other hand, is a ſubject fitted for the entertainment of all times, and is therefore of the ſort a great writer would chuſe, when he wanted to tranſmit a monument of his art and genius to poſterity. Such appears to have been the generous purpoſe of the poet in this admirable comedy, and the fate of it has been anſwerable to his intention; yet neither, I am afraid, is this a complete model. There are even ſome Incidents of a farcical invention; particularly the *Mountebank Scene* and *Sir Politique's tortoiſe* are in the taſte of the *old comedy*. Beſides, the *humour* of the dialogue is ſometimes on the point of becoming inordinate, as may be ſeen in the pleaſantry of *Corbaccio's miſtakes through deafneſs*, and in other inſtances. The caſt of his plays indeed could hardly be any other, if we attend to the *character* of the writer. For his nature was ſevere and rigid, and this in giving a ſtrength and manlineſs, gave at times too, an intemperance to his ſatyr. His taſte for ridicule

dicule was ſtrong but indelicate, which made him no over curious in the choice of his *topics*. And laſtly, his *ſtyle* in picturing characters, tho' maſterly, was without that elegance of *hand*, which is required to correct and allay the force of ſo bold a colouring. Thus, the biaſs of his nature leading him to Plautus rather than Terence for his model, it is not to be wondered that his wit is too frequently cauſtic; his raillery coarſe; and his humour exceſſive.

Some later writers for the ſtage have, no doubt, avoided theſe defects of the exacteſt of our old dramatiſts. But do they rival his excellencies? Poſterity, I am afraid, will judge otherwiſe, whatever may be now thought of ſome more faſhionable comedies. And if they do not, neither the ſtate of general manners, nor the turn of the public taſte appears to be ſuch as countenances the expectation of greater improvements. To thoſe, who are not over ſanguine in their hopes, our forefathers will perhaps be thought to have furniſhed (what, in nature, ſeem linked together) the faireſt example of *dramatic*, as of *real manners*.

But here it will probably be ſaid an affected zeal for the honour of our old poets, has betrayed their unwary advocate into a conceſſion, which diſcredits his whole pains on this ſubject. For to what purpoſe, may it be asked, this waſte of dramatic criticiſm, when, by the allowance of the idle ſpeculatiſt himſelf, his theory is likely to prove ſo unprofitable, at leaſt, if it be not ill-founded? The only part I can take

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in this nice conjuncture, is to ſcreen myſelf behind the authority of a much abler critical theoriſt, who had once the misfortune to find himſelf in theſe unlucky circumſtances, and has apologized for it. The *objection* is fairly urged by this fine writer; and in ſo profound and ſpeculative an age, as the preſent, I preſume to ſuggeſt no other anſwer, than he has thought fit to give to it. "Speculations of this ſort "ſays he, do not beſtow genius on thoſe who have "it not; they do not, perhaps, afford any great "aſſiſtance to thoſe who have; and moſt commonly "the men of genius are ev'n incapable of being "aſſiſted by ſpeculation. To what uſe then do "they ſerve? Why, to lead up *to the firſt principles* "*of beauty* ſuch perſons as love reaſoning and are "fond of reducing, under the controul of philoſophy, "ſubjects that appear the moſt independent of "it, and which are generally thought abandoned to "the caprice of taſte [n]".

[n] Ces ſortes de ſpeculations ne donnent point de genie à ceux qui en manquent; elles n'aident pas beaucoup ceux qui en ont: et le plus ſouvent même les gens de génie ſont incapables d'être aideés par les ſpeculations. A quoi donc ſont-elles bonnes? A faire remonter juſqu'aux premieres ideés du beau quelques gens qui aiment la raiſonnement, et ſe plaiſent à reduire ſous l'empire de la philoſophie les choſes qui en paroiſſent le plus indépendantes, et que l'on croit communément abandonnées à la biſarrerie des goûts. M. DE FONTENELLE.

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The END of the FIRST VOLUME

Errata in the Text.

Ver. 33. for *aera* r. *ære*.
401. for *hoc* r. *hos*.

Errata in the Notes.

Page 42. l. 17. for *natural* r. *naturally*.
49. l. 8. for *ones* r. *one*.
l. 9. after *quant* add *et quant*.
50. l. 11. after *by* add *a*.
53. l. 17. for *oratione* r. *orationi*.
for *ſimillimæ* r. *ſimillima*.
77. l. 9. for μὶν r. μὶν γ'.
19. l. 19. for *come* r. *came*.
93. l. 16. for *treat* r. *to treat*.
100. l. pen. after *tenderneſs* add ;
129 not. l. pen. for *teratur* r. *feratur*.
132. l. 2. after *hinted* add ,
135. l. 16. for *were* r. *was*.
141. l. 10. r. *the ſatyric and Atellane pieces, tho' ſimilar, &c.*
l. 19. dele *and*.
143. l. 1. after *have* add *an*.
146. n. l. 3. after *of* add *the*.
151. l. 9. for *Rectum* r. *Rictum*.
152. l. 12. after *heroes* add *were*.
164. l. 6. for *whence* r. *whereas*.
169. l. 18. for *then* r. *than*.
175. n. l. 9. for *have* r. *had*.
183. l. 6. for *his* r. *it's*.
188. l. 26. for *alia* r. *alio*.

Contents of the Diſcourſe.

Chap. III. for *Notice* r. *Notion*.

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